OLD SLEUTH'S OWN.

No. 146

WOODCHUCK JERRY;

OR,

The Terror of the Town.

A Tale of Scrapes, Scrambles and Scrimmages.

By OLD SLEUTH.

"JEHOSOPHAT! A MILLION SNAKES!"

NEW YORK:
J. S. OGILVIE PUBLISHING COMPANY,
57 ROSE STREET.

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Woodchuck Jerry.

CHAPTER I.

JERRY GETS A THRASHING AND GETS SQUARE.

"You little torment, I've got you now and I'll warm you."

A poorly dressed lad had just turned out of a lane into the turnpike when a man seized him and addressed the words with which we open our narrative.

The boy to whom the words were addressed neither trembled nor turned pale. He just stood with a defiant gleam in his gray eyes.

"Do you hear me, Jerry Cushman? I intend to warm you."

"So you said," returned the lad quietly.

"Do you know why?"

"No."

"Why don't you ask?"

"Oh, I'm so used to getting warmed, it's no use to ask about it."

"You are a defiant, tormenting little villain. You are always in mischief and always meddling with what don't concern you."

"So they say."

"Why don't you ask why I intend to warm you?"

"Because I've no curiosity. You say you'll warm me and I can't help it; but I'll tell you this much, if you do warm me you'll be sorry a good many times, that's all. I never did anything to you or yours."

"Yes, you did."

"All right, it's no use for me to deny anything in this town. I am a poor lad, and somebody must take all the blame, and I get it, that's all."

"You deserve it; you are always up to mischief."

"I never do any one any harm if they let me alone, but the whole town is against me. I am a regular Ishmael, I am. Every man's hand is against me, and only because I am poor and because my father is a ne'er-do-well. I can't help what my father is. He is a good, kind man at heart despite all his faults, and a better man than many of the people who despise him in this town. His ancestors lived in this country when the grandfathers of some of the men who abuse and despise him were swineherds in their native land."

"Well, take that, with all your high ancestry."

As the man spoke he dealt poor Jerry a vicious cuff on the ear. The lad made no outcry. He did not wince, but said in a dogged tone:

"All right, Lawyer Bierge, you will be sorry some day."

"So you threaten me, eh?"

"You'll be sorry."

"I will, eh? Well, take that—and that—and that."

Each time as the man spoke he dealt Jerry a blow. He knocked the lad off his feet, and as he lay upon the road the last "that," which came with greater emphasis, was accompanied by a vicious kick, and the man renewed the kick.

The lad was badly hurt, and yet, as intimated, he made no outcry. He took the blows and kicks in dogged silence, and probably the man would, in his mad rage, have done

the lad serious injury, had not a man coming along the road interfered. The man called:

"Hold, Bierge, don't kill the boy."

"Yes, I will kill him."

"You have punished him enough, no matter what his offense."

The man raised his foot to deal Jerry a final kick, when the man ran forward and said:

"Stop, I say. Kick the boy again and I'll kick you."

"What's that you say, Loughran?"

"I say if you kick the boy again I'll kick you."

The man Bierge did not deal the intended kick, but his eyes were blazing with rage as he said:

"You miserable fellow, I'll fix you. I've a bill to sue against you and I've held it back, but I'll bring you up now."

"You are mean enough to do it. Go ahead, but you shall not hurt the boy any more."

"You don't know what the boy did."

"I know Jerry is up to his tricks, but he don't deserve being kicked to death."

"He stoned my best rooster to death."

"Mr. Loughran," said Jerry, "I wouldn't deny anything to him, I will to you. I never shied a stone at anything belonging to him in my life, and I am sorry you interfered. He is mean enough to cause you trouble. All he can do to me is kick and cuff me, and I can stand that. He may do you greater harm."

"Let him do his worst. I won't stand by and see him abuse you, nor would I let him take the law into his own hands against any other lad in the village."

"That boy is the terror of the town," said Lawyer Bierge.

"He is full of his fun, I'll admit, but that's no reason why he should be maimed or killed."

"You will be sorry for your interference."

"I suppose I will, but my conscience is clear, and I believe that is more than you can say."

"I'll give it to you again, Jerry, the next time I meet you, and I'll warm you every time you cross my path."

"I may *cool* you off some day in return," called Jerry as the lawyer strode away.

"Did you kill his rooster, Jerry?" asked the man Loughran.

"No, I never harmed anything belonging to him. The man hates me anyhow; he hates our family. I've heard it was his conniving and tricks that drove my poor father to drink; but never mind, I'll get square with him. I am sorry, Mr. Loughran, you have incurred his enmity on my account."

"You need not fear for me, Jerry, I can take care of myself."

"You are a poor man. He may ruin you as he did my poor daddy."

"He may ruin me, but he'll never drive me to drink, and I may have something to say before he does me any great harm. I know a thing or two about him. Let him have a care how he pursues me, as he has threatened he will do. My day may come."

Mr. Loughran passed on. He was a poor man, a carpenter by trade, who had accumulated money enough to buy a small plot of ground on which he had built a modest little house; but it was said that there was a heavy mortgage on his little property and that he had hard work in paying the interest and maintaining his family.

Jerry Cushman, or Woodchuck Jerry, as he was called, was the son of a ne'er-do-well. Jerry's father had once been a well-to-do man, but somehow he had become involved, and had lost his money and had become a man of all work about the village, while his wife did washing for

other people and was fast working herself into the grave, as she was a delicate lady, had been well reared, and like her husband could claim relationship, distantly, to some of the most prominent families in the state. She had been a schoolteacher at the time her husband married her, and after the loss of his property she remained the faithful wife she had always been. They had one child, Jerry, who had been born to them after they had become poor, and the lad had never known anything but privation, from his infancy up to the hour when introduced to our readers. Then he was a lad of fourteen, robust, and fairly well educated, although he had never been to school. He had been his mother's pupil and she had preferred to spend much time instructing him, owing to the fact of the prejudice against him on the part of the other children in the village.

There appeared to be a deep-seated prejudice against the Cushmans, and there were various reasons to account for this prejudice. Jerry had few associates in the town. He was indeed a sort of Ishmael, and it was true that almost everything that was wrong was attributed to him. If a boy fell in a ditch he was sure to tell his parents that Jerry Cushman had pushed him into the water; and so it had become a habit or custom for the people to accuse Jerry of every bit of mischief that might be perpetrated.

Jerry had earned the sobriquet of Woodchuck Jerry, owing to his skill in capturing these animals, and many a meal had his expertness provided for the household when there was not a cent in the house wherewith to purchase something better.

It was a common thing for the boys to put up all manner of jokes on poor Jerry, and the result was that in time he had been driven to retaliation, and thus it was he had come to be recognized as the terror of the town.

Jerry's father had gone down the descent which leads

to squalor and wretchedness, drawn down by the love of cursed rum. He had lost all self-respect and had forfeited the respect of all his neighbors. There was but one person who still clung to him, and that was his wife. She never ceased to love him, and ever sought to win him back to his former manhood.

The lads in the village were not vindictive; but they had been taught to look upon Jerry as a terror, and a constant warfare had existed between our hero and the other lads.

After his beating Jerry limped away to the miserable shanty he called his home. It stood outside the village on a deserted road and near a belt of woods, and there, lonely and despised, he and his mother led their miserable lives.

Jerry never complained, and managed to conceal from his mother the fact that he had been badly beaten, and it is possible that had he told his mother who had beaten him she could have explained to him the hatred and vindictiveness of the lawyer; for in her younger days Mrs. Cushman was the most beautiful girl in the county, and despite all her hardships she still retained some of her former beauty, and all of her gentleness and loveliness of character.

Jerry complained of being tired, and crawled up into his miserable attic bedroom, where he had a sort of workshop, and he said, as he threw himself upon his miserable bed:

"I'll get square with that man; I'll make him sorry."

Jerry was well posted as to the real habits of the ma Bierge. He pretended to be very devout, and as his own town was a temperance one he would periodically go to a neighboring town and get "full," as the saying goes, and Jerry had often met the hypocrite stealing home after midnight, as full as a tick.

The lad determined to take advantage of this weakness to get square with the lawyer, and he excused his intended mischief on the ground that his trick would be a sort of reformatory lesson.

The road to the adjacent town led along beside a cliff, and down this cliff there trickled a little stream of water; unless there was a hard rain it was but a mere ooze of water. The stream ran down the cliff and across the road, and it was along this road that the lawyer had to travel in going to and from the neighboring town. Saturday, as a rule, was the day that he went over to get full, and it was always at a very late hour, when the village people were all asleep, that he returned. As stated, Jerry knew the habits of the man well, and he determined to take advantage of his weakness to punish him.

On the night following the "welting" our hero had received he stole out from his home and proceeded to the spot where the little stream trickled over the cliff, and with spade and hoe he set to work. It does not concern our readers what he did—they shall learn of the final result of his labor.

The lad worked until almost daylight and then returned to his home, and as he moved along he muttered:

"It will do him good; but oh, jiminy! what a dose I will give him."

The following day Jerry was busy, very busy, and at night he stole away again to the cliff, and there he worked for many hours once again, and upon the second night as he started for home he muttered:

"We are all ready now, and old Bierge will take his dose to-morrow night."

The following afternoon Bierge started for the neighboring town, and we will add that he had made good his threat and had commenced an annoying suit against the man Loughran, whose only crime had been his interference in Jerry's favor.

There was a thoughtful look on our hero's face all that afternoon, and it was attributed by his thoughtful and observant mother to other causes than the real one, for on

the previous night Jerry's father had come home all cut and bruised, the result of a brawl in the very town to which Lawyer Bierge was in the habit of going.

Jerry retired at his usual hour, but between ten and eleven o'clock he stole forth and proceeded to the cliff, and there he settled himself on the "lay low."

The lad had constructed a very ingenious contrivance for the carrying out of his revenge. In the first place he had dammed up the water so it could not flow over the cliff, and he had dug out a reservoir that would hold quite a quantity of water—sufficient for his purpose. He had also constructed a water-gate on the cliff side, overlooking the road, and he had made it so skillfully that by pulling a peg the gate would divide and let the whole volume of accumulated water go over in one great rush. In fact, when he let it go he believed it would be, as he called it, a young deluge.

Jerry took up his position, and as he lay there on the watch under the stars he did a great deal of thinking, and he muttered:

"This cannot go on always, there must be some change. I will have to go away. I would have gone long ago but for poor mother, but for her sake I must go away and make a home for her. There is no hope that father will ever change his ways, and mother will die if there is not any change. She cannot stand it much longer, and here am I, hunted and hounded like a homeless cat. Just to think of it! they call me the terror of the town, and I wouldn't hurt a fly if they'd let me alone; but no, I don't meet a boy on the road but he shies a stone at me if he is far enough away to run after his shot, and men kick me and cuff me around. No one will employ me, and I am a poor, despised, hounded fugitive. I can't go to school, to church, or to singing meeting. I can't go anywhere, but sneak around in the woods hunting for woodchucks, and

even then I am liable to be hunted myself by the farmer who owns the land. Yes, yes, there must be a change; but before I leave this town there are several on whom I will get square, and first of all old Bierge. He has always been an enemy of our family, and I've heard that in the past he had as much to do with the ruin of my father as any one else; and now I'll get square with him and do him good--and, by ginger! here he comes."

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE DELUGE.

THE lawyer announced his approach by whistling. He was a great whistler, and when drunk he was always whistling, and he often whistled to hide his condition, and for years he had succeeded in concealing his weakness. Only a few knew of it and they did not dare betray it. Jerry had known of it a long time and he of all others cared less to betray the man, as he already had enemies enough, as he thought.

Bierge was particularly full on the night of which we write. Jerry had gone down to the edge of the cliff to meet him, and while the lawyer staggered along the road the boy crawled parallel with him on the edge of the cliff. The lawyer came to a halt and soliloquized, and strangely enough he discussed the very matter which was to make him anything but a Noah that night. He sat down on a rock, and when Jerry came to a halt to listen he was not five feet away from his victim, and could plainly overhear every word the inebriated lawyer said.

"I tell you," muttered the man, "I'll make Loughran squeal; yes, I will. I don't like the man anyway. He is

too independent for me; he is like all the Irish. When his mad is up he don't care a rap for any one; but I'll make him care for me; yes, I will. Just wait; I"—the man laughed as drunken men ofttimes laugh when heartily self-satisfied—"Yes, I'll make him care for me. And that Cushman boy, hang him, I'll catch him again, and the next time I catch him I'll maim him for life. He's her son, and old Cushman is his father. Well, well, I've had a little revenge there anyhow, and I'll have more. That is a smart boy, that. He'll be somebody some day if I don't knock all chances out of him, and I will. To think that his mother should ever have the privilege of being proud of him. I'll see that she don't; yes, I'll see that she don't. I'll fix him the next time I catch him when there isn't some fighting Irishman around to take his part. Yes, I'll fix him, and I'll let his mother see; yes, I will."

Jerry, as intimated, overheard every word, and could not understand the lawyer's bitter and revengeful allusions to his mother—that gentle, delicate, kindly woman, who had never harmed any one in all her sad and innocent life.

"I wonder," soliloquized Jerry, "what he's got against my mother? The old wretch! hang it, if I had known he hated her I'd have served him out long ago. It's possible he is aiding to make her life miserable. I've heard strange allusions at different times. I didn't understand them, but now I begin to discern. Yes, it is possible that wretch has been hating my gentle mother all these years, and he has been adding to her cup of bitterness. Well, I'll give him more than a cup of bitterness to-night—I'll give him a young lake, a full tide. Yes, I will; I'll make you sorry, you miserable, hateful, revengeful, cruel old hypocrite."

The lawyer kept up his soliloquy and Jerry kept up his thinking, and every moment a revelation was being made to him.

"Yes," went on old Bierge, "I'll injure that boy for

life. I'll make a cripple of him, and I'll ruin him by putting up a trick on him that will send him to jail. I'll wring her heart for her, the disdainful hussy! to refuse me and marry that weak old fool, Cushman, because he had money; but how much money has he got now? Ha! ha! ha! I've got the money, and she's got penniless Cushman. But this boy—yes, he may bring her some comfort in the future. I've set the whole town against him and his family, but it appears that there are some people who appreciate him. Yes, and I'll look out for them and I'll ruin him; yes, I will, while he's young. He is getting to be quite a lad. He may go away some day and I will lose my chance. Yes, I'll lay for him and the next time I meet him I'll cripple him; yes, I will, and then I'll make a serious charge against him and have him up before the squire. Yes, I'll ruin that boy."

"Look out for yourself, old hypocrite," muttered Jerry, "I know now the source of half the misery my family have endured. You are our foe; you hate my mamma, you hate papa, you hate me. All right; I hate you and I'll serve you out. You've had your revenge, but now it shall be the Cushman's hour. I'll haunt you, old rascal; yes, I'll haunt you. I'll be on your track from this time out, and I'll make your life miserable. So you will cripple me, eh? or send me to jail? All right; retribution awaits you. Yes, you are full of sin, but you'll get a high old washout to-night, you bet; so rise, old man, march on and take your deluge."

The lawyer after each remark would laugh in an idiotic manner and rub his hands together as he chuckled, and finally he rose from his seat and started on, and Jerry also ran along the cliff to his contrivance. The lawyer was in high maudlin glee as he approached that part of the road opposite to the cliff waterfall, and a waterfall it was destined to be upon that occasion.

"All ready," chuckled Jerry, as the lawyer drew near. The latter had had his chuckle—our hero thought it was his turn. As Bierge arrived directly opposite the waterfall a sudden impulse seized him—he commenced to "whoop her up" and dance, and he soon arrived at the exact spot. Jerry was eyeing him and could see, and at length the lad ejaculated:

"Here goes."

The lawyer made more frantic leaps and whoops, when suddenly there came a rush and at least a dozen hogsheads of water went over the cliff. The lawyer, in the midst of his wild, hilarious dance, was caught in the swirl of rushing water and hurled to the ground, and the water still poured on him in diminishing volume, and his whoops and cries became real. He was the worst soused man that ever caught an artificial whirlpool, and he caught it good, not only in the neck but all over him. He was drenched to the skin, and under the skin chilled to the marrow. The water suddenly subsided and there he lay, a pitiable object indeed.

At length he rose to his feet. He looked round the cliff and the water was flowing on gently as on a summer noonday.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the lawyer, "there must have been a cloudburst."

He felt himself all over.

"I haven't been dreaming; no, it is real water, by jiminy! and I am wet to the skin—wet through and through. Great ginger! what has happened?"

Jerry lay low, and oh, how happy he was for once! He had enjoyed a perfect revenge.

Bierge meantime had determined to investigate. He started to crawl up the cliff. He desired to learn where the waterfall had come from, but he was too "full." He got halfway up, slipped and rolled back to the road, and for a moment there he lay.

"Dang it," he muttered, "the cold water has made me so stiff I can't climb; but I'll try it again."

He made a second attempt and almost reached the top, when down he went again, and this time he fell so hard he cut his head open and bled like a stuck pig. For a few moments he lay still, and while he lay there he muttered: "This gets me; I don't understand. The spring must have burst; yes, just as I got there, and I got it all and I got it good. Oh jiminy! what will my Jane say? Hang her, she will claim I am drunk and that I fell in the ditch, and here I am as sober as a judge and as innocent as a child. I didn't fall in any ditch—a ditch fell on me."

Even as "full" as he was the lawyer laughed at his own wit, but in soberer tones he added:

Yes, this is darn hard luck. The ditch fell on me and the old woman will fall on me too, and here are my best clothes all spoiled, and I may catch my death from cold. Oh, mercy! mercy! what could it have been?"

Bierge did not attempt to climb the cliff again to investigate, but all covered with blood and water he started for his home, his teeth chattering and his limbs growing stiff with cold.

"So much for you, Mr. Bierge, for the present. So you will cripple me when you meet me again, eh? All right; I am glad you told me, so I will be ready for you. I do not mean to let you knock me around at will any more. Come what may, if you attempt to warm me you'll get the worst of it."

Jerry had determined to see the finale of his trick, at least as much of it as he could, and he followed the lawyer toward his home, keeping at a good distance. Bierge had almost reached his home when he met the village doctor; the latter had been kept at the home of a very sick patient. He and Bierge lived near each other and naturally would pursue the same route. The doctor overtook the strug-

gling lawyer, and under the uncertain gleam of a quarter moon discerned partially his neighbor's plight.

"Hello, Bierge. What is the matter with you? Have you been taking a bath with your clothes on?"

"No, a bath took me."

"What?"

"A bath took me."

"Old man, you must have fallen off the bridge."

"Do you think so?"

"Sure."

The lawyer had partially sobered up.

"I didn't fall off the bridge."

"Then you fell into the ditch."

"I didn't fall into the ditch."

"How did you get so wet?"

"The ditch fell on me."

The doctor laughed.

"The old story," he said; "the road flew up."

"See here, doctor, I am telling you the truth."

"Oh, yes, certainly you are. The ditch rose out of its bed and doused you."

"That's just what happened."

"You mean that is what you will tell your wife."

"I mean that is just what really happened."

"Oh, yes, certainly; stick to it, Bierge. Your wife will believe you, of course."

"Doctor, listen to me."

"Go on."

"I was detained over at the next town."

"Yes."

"I was coming home."

"Yes."

"I was near the cliff where the little stream flows over."

"Yes."

"As I came along the stream suddenly became a torrent. It rushed down upon me and overwhelmed me."

"Oh, yes, certainly; and there hasn't been any rain for weeks."

"I'll swear I tell the truth."

"Certainly, Bierge, stick to it, stick to it. Everybody will believe it. Yes, the stream suddenly became a torrent and overwhelmed you—a good tale, an excellent tale for your wife, Bierge, but get up a better for other people, for that one won't do."

The doctor did not like Bierge and he was malignantly glad to catch him in such a plight. When one tells the truth one does not like to be doubted—it is very aggravating. Bierge did tell the truth, and he became very much aggravated.

The doctor did not like him and he knew it, and further, he did not like the doctor, and this fact made him even more sensitive.

"Doctor, I am telling the truth."

"Oh, certainly; stick to it."

"You doubt my word?"

"Do you think I am a fool?"

"Do you doubt my word?"

"You insult me if you dare think I believe your story. Yes, you take me for a fool."

"You think I am lying?"

"To speak plainly, I know you are lying."

"I'll swear I tell the truth."

"And I'd swear as soon that you are lying."

"Doctor, I won't stand it."

"I can't help it. You are not going to cram any such thing as that down my throat. It's none of my business if you did fall in the ditch, but you are not going to make me think the ditch fell on you. I reckon it was a whisky ditch if anything that fell on you and you fell in the water ditch."

Bierge was mad—real mad. As our readers know, he

was really telling the truth. He felt himself insulted He was only partially sober and he exclaimed:

"Look out what you say, doctor, or I will knock you down."

"What's that—you will knock me down?"

"Yes, I will, if you repeat that the ditch did not fall on me."

"I repeat it; I say you fell in the ditch, and don't you try to make me believe anything else. As I said, it's none of my affair, but you can't cram the lie down my throat that you have got ready for your wife."

Bierge lost his temper entirely and he was in that condition a man usually is when just getting over a spree—ugly, very ugly.

"You call me a liar, doctor?" he asked in an indignant tone.

"You can take it as you please."

"I won't stand it."

"I can't help it. I repeat, it's none of my business if you did fall in the ditch. I had no business to ask you, but since I did I won't let you cram such a story down my throat about the little trickling waterfall rising to a torrent and deluging you."

"It did."

"I say it didn't."

"Then you call me a liar?"

"Take it as you choose."

"And you take that."

Bierge made a stroke at the doctor. The latter was mad, and he hauled off after dodging the blow intended for him and dealt Bierge a "corker" square between the eyes, and over went Bierge, bleeding profusely at the nose. The doctor was sorry the moment he struck the blow, and ran to pick Bierge up and said:

"I am sorry, Bierge, but you attempted to strike me."

"I'll make you pay for this, I'll have you up in court. You assaulted me in the dead of night. Yes, you meant to rob me. I'll send you to jail, you villain."

The doctor was not a rich man, and he was well aware of the vindictiveness of the lawyer.

"I did not assault you," he said.

"Yes, you did. I will have a pair of black eyes, I know I will. I will have the proof. This will cost you a fortune, doctor; yes, a fortune."

Bierge moved on toward his home and the doctor continued his own way, feeling very uncomfortable.

As stated, he knew the vindictive character of Bierge. The latter was a rich man and a lawyer, and he would press his case without cost, while the doctor, who had a large family, would be compelled to hire a lawyer to defend him, and he muttered:

"Hang it, I am sorry. That fellow will make trouble for me, and he will manufacture proof. I am sorry I met the scoundrel."

At that instant Jerry ran up and called:

"Good-evening, doctor."

"Hello, who are you?"

"It's all right, you need not mind Bierge. There was a witness; yes, he struck first and you only struck him back. Let him sue you and in the end you will turn the tables on him."

"Who are you?"

"Never mind who I am. There were two witnesses; he struck you first and you need not fear. Your witnesses will be on hand when the time comes if he dares sue you."

"Will you tell me your name?"

"No, doctor, it's all right; but the ditch did swell up and overwhelm Bierge, and it may swell again some night That man is a villain. Good-night, doctor, good-night."

CHAPTER III.

JERRY WORKS A GREAT SURPRISE.

JERRY made his way to his home, and he was feeling quite pleasant. He had doused his enemy and had seen him knocked down, and he knew that on Sunday morning Bierge would be nursing a pair of black eyes and possibly a cold in the head.

On the morning following the incidents we have related Jerry came down late for his mush and milk. His mother attended him and the lad could see tears in her beautiful blue eyes. Mrs. Cushman was a woman of only thirty-eight, and her husband was a man just turned forty. He had been a handsome man, but as later experience proved he was a very weak man.

"Mother," said Jerry, when an opportunity appeared, "do you know that I have an idea that Lawyer Bierge has a special grudge against us?"

"Jerry," said the mother, "it is no use to attempt to conceal it longer. That man is at the bottom of all our troubles. You are getting old enough now for me to talk to you. Yes, that man has a grudge against us. I cannot speak of the occasion of his grudge, but I can of its consequences. Your father is naturally of a confiding disposition. Your father inherited a fine farm located only a few miles from here. That farm now belongs to Bierge. In some way he secured a mortgage, and he foreclosed it and drove us forth. Your father was a man who had never touched a drop of liquor in his life until he became intimate with Bierge, and then he fell to drinking and the men were always together. Bierge got your father into some kind of speculation and the first I knew he had a

mortgage on our place and in time, as I told you, he foreclosed it and took possession."

"Mother," said Jerry in a meditative tone, "I believe Bierge robbed father of that property."

"I have never doubted it, my son; but he is a lawyer, he laid his plans skillfully, and we would never be able to make the truth known. Oh, if your father would only give up drink, then we could move away from this town and go where we are not known and commence over again."

"Why did you not do it sooner, mamma?"

"There was no need until your father took to drinking, and then I preferred to remain here where he was well known, and where his father was known before him. But, Jerry, all our old friends have moved away. All the companions of my youth have gone west and they are all doing well. If your father would give up drinking we could go west, and maybe in time he could get on his feet. Here we are surrounded by people who hate us. I know Bierge has told terrible stories to the newcomers. Few people that live here now remember what he was. Others never knew; they only remember and know him for what he is. Jerry, if it were not for you I should have died. I have lived on for your sake, but now something must be done. You cannot be sacrificed. You are pursued and hounded because of your father. Boys sneer at you and stone you, who are not really worthy to lace your shoes, comparatively. It's terrible, and though I still love your father and would stay by him until the end if it were not for you, I must do my duty. Your father is a hopeless case, and we must leave him. Yes, we must steal away like two criminals in the night. I am sorry for him, but I must do my duty to you, and I will."

"Hold on, mamma, you need not fear for me, and what is more I've been thinking a long time. I knew that something must be done, and something shall be done. We will make one effort before we desert papa."

"Make one effort, my son?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean we will make an effort to cure him."

"My son, he is past cure."

"You say he is a good-hearted man."

"He is, and I have appealed to all of his highest sensibilities, but to no purpose. He is lost to his manhood and self-respect forever."

"Mamma, I'll cure him."

"You will?"

"Yes, I will."

"How?"

"I am called the terror of the town."

"You do not deserve to be so called, my son."

"Yes, I do, mamma. I've cut up a great many tricks, and I propose to cut up some more yet. I've a long score to settle. I've got in one on Lawyer Bierge."

"What do you mean, my son? What have you done? Oh, I beg and pray of you, do not give that man any hold on you. It is what he most desires. Through you he could strike me deeper than in any other way. I have often wondered that he has spared you so long, and it is fear of him, yes, fear of what he may do to you that led me to think of fleeing away."

"We will not flee away, mamma. We will stay right here and fight it out. I am nearly fourteen now and I have got sense far beyond my years, I know I have. I can and will protect you now; but my first move will be to cure papa, and I'll cure him. I've been thinking of it long time."

"No, no, my son, you will only do something that will be followed by consequences."

"Yes, and the consequences will bring happiness to you, mamma. I will run no risks. I will not harm papa

if I fail; but I am the terror of the town; I will become a terror to papa—such a terror that he will give up the cup forever."

"I fear, my son, you contemplate something rash."

"You need not fear."

"Tell me what you propose to do."

"No, no, mamma; but, on my honor, you have no cause to fear. I will do no harm, I will run no risk, and I believe I will succeed. The result to be obtained warrants the attempt. Do not think of going away yet. No, no; we will make one attempt to remain here and live down our disgrace. Papa has never committed any crime, he has injured no one but himself. We will cure him, save him, and in that way get some satisfaction, and later on we may do more. And as far as Bierge is concerned, you need not fear him; he cannot harm me."

"Jerry, I hardly dare consent."

"Mamma, you propose something worse. What will become of papa if we run away from him? No, we will save him, we will cure him. I will, you can trust me."

"What is your plan?"

"Wait a few days and see the result. Mamma, you can trust me, I am almost a man now."

"My son, I will trust you.

Jerry set to work to carry out a plan he had long carried in his mind. He was an ingenious fellow and he soon succeeded in making one of the most curious remedies ever used to cure a man of the love of rum.

Jerry got a lot of skins. He secured some fine silk and in time he succeeded in making the most terrible-looking hydra-headed monster ever seen. He had the perfect body of a huge snake and to the snake body were attached three necks and heads, and from each head was a protruding tongue which by an ingenious method could be illuminated and made to appear like a fiery tongue. Within this mon-

ster he arranged for a burning candle—indeed for several burning candles—so that the three heads would be illuminated as well as the spitting tongues. It was indeed a very remarkable contrivance. He did not show it to his mother. He did not recur again to the plan he had in his mind.

Jerry's father had spells when he started out to reform. He was not always "full," and indeed the poor man did have seasons when he went almost crazy under the forceful harrowings of remorse. He had been sober for three days, and Mrs. Cushman became hopeful. Jerry did not; he expected that even the gnawings of remorse would create the appetite, and his conclusion was verified. The lad saw his father go to the neighboring town. He well knew what it meant, and in what condition he would return. He had obtained a little money and that portended a big drunk. Jerry made all his arrangements. When night came he bade his mother to go to bed.

"I will wait up for papa," he said.

The mother was weary. She determined to pretend to retire, but alas, once in her mean little room she fell asleep and Jerry had the field to himself, and there he sat patiently and hopefully watching the poor old clock standing in the corner of the kitchen.

At length the clock marked midnight, and Jerry said:

"It's time for him to come. Poor papa, I will show you the false fate to-night in hopes to save you from the real fate in the future."

Jerry walked out to the garden gate and soon he heard his father approaching. The inebriated man had a habit of muttering to himself or at other times he would declaim aloud. Upon the night when Jerry intended to try his remedy the man was declaiming as he approached his home, and thus our hero had full warning of his near approach.

Mr. Cushman came along. He was in an exceedingly

merry mood. At that moment all remorse was buried under the cursed exhilaration of whisky. He thought not of wife, son, heaven or hell. He only knew he felt good and merry, and on he came, when suddenly he halted. A terrible sight met his gaze—a nest of serpents hissing fire confronted him. He leaped into the air in terror, exclaiming:

"Jehosophat! a million snakes."

Indeed it did appear like a million snakes to him, and his blood curdled with chills of horror. Over he fell, blinding his eyes with his hands and uttering wild cries as he lay in the road.

Jerry jerked his fiery monster away and ran to his father, inquiring:

"What is the matter, father?"

"Away, away," screamed the man.

"Oh, poor papa, what is the matter?"

"Do you see 'em? Do you see 'em?"

"See what, apa?"

"The snakes, the fiery snakes."

"No, papa, there are no snakes here."

"No snakes? no snakes? 'Tis false; there are a million snakes fresh from hell. I saw them hissing fire at me."

"Come, come, father, let me help you into the house."

Jerry was a powerful lad. His abstemious habits and his constant exercise had developed great muscular power in a boy, and besides he took great delight in practicing athletic games. He was a swimmer, runner, and rower, for he had run races with woodchucks and he had rowed and swum in solitariness on a distant lake.

Jerry raised his father and assisted him to the house, and Mrs. Cushman, having been aroused, came into the kitchen. As the scared man beheld her in a half sober tone he said:

"Mary, I am done drinking for life. The last warning

has come. As I live, I swear I'll never touch another drop of liquor during my remaining days."

"William, you have promised so often."

"I mean it this time; yes, I mean it this time. I've received a final warning; yes, a final warning. I am done drinking forever."

Wife and son assisted the man to bed and Mrs. Cushman returned to talk to Jerry.

"What happened, Jerry?"

The lad led his mother into the yard and showed her his contrivance.

"It is very ingenious, Jerry, but your father will forget all about it in the morning."

"I do not think he will, mother. He is half sober now. He may remember it."

On the morning following the incident we have related William Cushman arose late. He ate a slight breakfast and appeared very thoughtful. His wife had never seen him in such good condition following one of his sprees. Later in the day he said:

"Mary, do you think you and Jerry could get along alone here for a little while—say for a year?"

"What do you mean, William?"

"I am going away."

"Going away?"

"Yes."

"Going where?"

"Going to make a new home for you and Jerry. I am going to turn over a new leaf and become a man once more. I have been a poor, miserable fool long enough."

"Why go away, William?"

"There is no chance for me here, and besides that devil Bierge would never let me succeed. But let me go away, let me get on my feet once more, let me get back my lost manhood and I will be a match for that man, and some

day I may call him to an accounting. Mary, every dollar that man possesses to-day he stole from me. He is a villain. He set out to ruin me and he succeeded, but his devilish influence over me is done for, and from this hour out I will assert my manhood. I cannot do it here, but I have talent, I have friends and relatives who will aid me when I prove I mean to become a man again. Do not interpose any objection. They cannot harm you and Jerry, but they would make it harder for me, especially Bierge. I will go; yes, I will go."

"We will think it over, William."

"You must decide between now and to-night, for before midnight I start on my journey for Boston. You need not fear for me, I am in earnest. Nothing can swerve me from my purpose. They may call it imagination—the snakes—I care not whether they were real or the inventions of my imagination, they shall be real to me. My eyes are opened, my conscience is aroused. I go away and in less than a year we will be able to hold our heads on a level with any one. I am resolved, and I go to-night."

"Let me talk it over with Jerry."

"Jerry is a good lad. He has been an outcast and suffered because of my disgraceful conduct. It is for him and for you that I go away. He is a discreet lad, I can leave him with you. It will only be for a short time. We have walked through the valley of humiliation, we shall ascend to the mountain of exaltation."

Mrs. Cushman had never seen her husband appear to better advantage. She had never seen him display such energy and determination; she had never heard him use such eloquent language.

"I may consent."

"You must consent; I will go whether you consent or not."

"Why not let us go with you?"

"No, no; you and Jerry remain here. It will not be for long. I will go alone; I must not be hampered. I must be free, and I can win success all the quicker, and you will suffer less here. Yes, in the country you will be safer than in the city, until such time as I can prepare a home for you. Mary, you are fitted to adorn a mansion and you shall, I swear it, you shall, and it will not be long before I invite you to one; but I must have a fair chance."

Jerry had been a listener and he stepped forth and said:

"Mamma, papa is right. He would have no chance here. I can take care of you. We can live awhile on roast woodchuck; but papa must go, and if he fails then we can join him, and you and I will put our shoulders to the wheel."

"Mary, I shall go. Prepare for me a little bundle."

"It will be a very little one, papa, if mamma gets up all your clothes."

The father laughed and answered:

"It will come out all right, Jerry. We will all get square some day with our enemies, and we have a great many in this town."

That same night William Cushman started to walk to Boston, determined to make a man of himself, and his wife and son were left to face their enemies in the town.

CHAPTER IV.

JERRY MEETS AND ROUTS HIS ENEMIES.

A WEEK passed and then it began to be rumored through the village that William Cushman had disappeared. The rumor was accompanied with very strange and startling

intimations, and finally the squire saw fit to call on Mrs. Cushman and make inquiries.

"Your husband has gone away," said the squire.

"Yes, sir, he has gone away."

"When did he go?"

"About a week ago."

"Where did he go?"

"To Boston."

"Can you give me his address in Boston?"

"I cannot."

"Is it not very strange that you cannot give me your husband's address?"

"I will give it to you as soon as I get it."

"It's very strange," muttered the squire; "yes, very strange."

The squire asked Mrs. Cushman a great many more questions and finally departed, muttering in a very threatening manner:

"It's very strange; yes, it's very strange, and I hope it is all right. But, Mrs. Cushman, there are rumors going abroad."

"Oh, I suppose so."

"Yes, rumors involving your son and even yourself. This sudden disappearance of Mr. Cushman is very mysterious, yes, very mysterious, and I will tell you now unless it is satisfactorily cleared up I will have to take steps; yes, take steps."

When Jerry came home his mother told him of the squire's visit, and the lad said:

"Bierge is at the bottom of all this. They call me the terror of the town, but he is the real terror. That man is always making some one uncomfortable, but we do not fear. Let them do their worst."

As Jerry retired to his attic room he mutterd:

"I'll give that Bierge another dose, and I'll give him a good one next time. I've learned the use of fire."

Jerry had indeed learned the use of fire, and he had a piece of good fortune. He was walking along the road one day when he saw a horse dashing madly down the road. Jerry saw at a glance that the horse was madly running away, and he determined to risk his life in order to save the life of the occupant of the carriage. He succeeded; he actually caught the horse and clung to him until he brought the maddened animal to a halt. A bright little girl was the only occupant of the carriage, but a few moments later a gentleman appeared. He had been a witness of Jerry's daring act and rewarded the lad with a twenty-dollar bill, and the coming of that money was our hero's piece of good fortune. He was compelled to travel to the next town to get the bill changed into small money. He knew no one would change it for him in his native village, and while in the adjacent town he bought a number of articles which he knew he would need in carrying out his contemplated scheme of revenge, or rather of retaliation. He spent five dollars for the articles named, and he spent five for necessary articles for his mother, and on his return presented her with the balance of the money, permitting her to purchase many little articles that she greatly needed.

Jerry set to work to manufacture his various contrivances, and finally he said:

"Now I reckon I can have a little fun at least."

Some one had set a certain faction of the lads in the village against Jerry. The leader of the gang was Tom Bierge, a nephew of the lawyer, and Ennie Stoop, a son of the squire. Both these lads were larger and older than Jerry, and many a time they had caught and thumped him in an unmerciful manner, and they had been making boasts ever since the disappearance of Jerry's father that they would catch him and force him to a confession or beat the life out of him, and several times Jerry had been com-

pelled to run like a deer to escape them. It would have been of no use for him to face them. They were, as stated, larger than he, and then they had the gang with them and they were an unmerciful lot. Indeed, if Jerry had not been tough they would have maimed him many a time.

Jerry went one night into the woods, and he set to work to arrange for a surprise for the boys. When he had everything ready he muttered:

"All right; to-morrow night I will give 'em a run."

On the following night Jerry purposely went to the place where his enemies were wont to assemble, and at once they espied him and with a shout started for him. Jerry, who was prepared, ran from them, taking a certain direction, and like a pack of hounds they were at his heels. The lad turned into the copse of woods where he had been to work the night before, and with yells and shouts the pack followed, when suddenly there followed a succession of wild and frantic yells. The pursuing boys had run just so far when in an instant there arose around them a perfect shower of hissing fire. In wild terror the little rascals fell, one upon the other, yelling and screaming like so many maniacs, and over they rolled to get beyond the line of fiery flame, and as each succeeded he ran like a deer back toward the village.

Jerry was up a tree and a witness of the wild scene, and he enjoyed it, for he had arranged it. The fire was harmless, but it presented a terrible front, and a more scared lot of lads never went through a fiery ordeal, and when safe back at their haunt in the village they began to discuss the matter. Only one boy had the sense to account for the mystery, and he said:

"Jerry has got one in on us. He is a terror, anyhow, and we will have to look out for him; but we will get square."

A regular warfare had been inaugurated. It was one boy against a dozen.

The village boys, when they recovered from their fright and fully realized how they had been duped, were wild.

They could appreciate Jerry's sense of triumph, in fact some of the lads asserted that they could hear him laugh while they were tumbling over each other in the hissing flames.

There was an old barn where the village boys were wont to assemble. It is an old trick of boys in the country to take possession of an old building, and on the night following the baptism of fire, as Jerry facetiously denominated his trick, the village boys gathered in the barn and held a consultation, and Jerry bravely got under the barn in advance, knowing they would be there. He desired to learn their scheme.

It was known that our hero usually went alone on Saturdays to a lake some miles away from the town to fish. It was a wild, lonely place, and very difficult of access, and on that account few visited the place; indeed there were not many who knew the way there. We will state that where our hero lived it was a wild country at best, and the county in which the town was located was a great resort for hunters and fishermen from the city, who secured regular guides at a neighboring town and went off in the woods of Maine to camp, weeks at a time.

As stated, Jerry had secured a position under the barn and lay there to overhear his fate discussed. The leader in the crusade against him was Bierge, and Jerry had often wished that he might catch Bierge alone, when he felt that he could risk a regular rough and tumble contest with him.

"Boys," said Bierge, "we must get square."

"You bet," came the response from several quarters.

"That fellow has the best of us so far, in the past."

"He has."

"I've got a plan."

"What is your plan, Tom?"

"We will tar and feather him."

The boys made no response. To tar and feather even such a poor and despised mortal as Jerry Cushman was an illegal proceeding and might possibly lead to trouble, for there were some people in the village who had no grudge against our hero or his mother. These were the people who occasionally employed her, and some of them had great sympathy for the noble woman. As intimated, silence followed the proposition, and Bierge said:

"We can do it."

One of the lads suggested that they might get into trouble, as proceedings of that kind were unlawful in the State of Maine.

"We can manage it all right."

"How?"

"No one will ever know that we were the parties."

"How can we conceal it?"

"Easy enough."

"How?"

"We will go under a disguise."

"That won't do."

"It will when you hear my story."

"Let's hear it."

"Jerry Cushman goes every Saturday up to Loon Lake."

"Yes."

"All right; we can paint our faces and get ourselves up like a tribe of Indians. We will disguise ourselves so our own mothers would not know us. We can catch him, and jabber all sorts of gibberish, and give him the best coat of tar mortal ever wore and no one will be the wiser."

"It might leak out and then——"

"We will bind every boy by an oath, and whoever breaks the oath will meet our vengeance."

The proposition was a very tempting one to the boys. Only eight had been let into the scheme and they were all considered reliable and trustworthy, and they were the eight of all others who most bitterly hated Jerry, for several of them had been his victims in times past.

The warfare against Jerry had existed for a long time, and he had been welted many a time, as indicated, and at times he had caught this and that lad and had welted him in turn. In fact he had often caught his foes in detail and gone for them, and, as stated, most of the boys present had a personal grievance against Jerry, the terror of the town.

Jerry overheard every word that was said, and there came a grim smile over his face. The lad felt pretty good anyhow, as there had come a letter from his father and its contents were most encouraging and cheering to mother and son.

"We can fix that fellow forever," said Bierge; "drive him from the town, send him off the town like his drunken father; or probably, better still, we can force him to confess what has become of his father. Do you know, boys, I believe his father is dead. Yes, and it is rumored that there is to be an investigation if the squire does not hear from old Cushman pretty soon. That story about his going to Boston to reform don't go altogether, and we may force the fellow to tell the truth. And there are other rumors in town; those people in a strange manner have had money lately. Mrs. Cushman has spent money in the town and she went over to B—— and spent money. I tell you there is a mystery somewhere, and we may solve it. At any rate that fellow has the best of us now; we must get square."

Bierge proceeded and unfolded his whole plan, and indeed it was quite an ingenious scheme. The boys finally agreed to join him in the great plan for revenge, and later

Jerry heard them bind themselves by an oath. He had, as stated, overheard their whole scheme, and he lay low until the lads departed and then he crept forth, muttering:

"So they will tar and feather me, eh? They will get up in disguise as Indians and they will arrange several ways to make it appear against all chances that the deed will have been done by some one from a neighboring town, or from across the border. All right; they have laid their plans well. I will lay mine, and hang me, if I don't give the whole of them the worst dose they ever had in their lives I will leave the town myself."

Jerry had several times accompanied parties into the woods. He had even gone over into Canada with them and had seen all kinds of game killed, and he had a few trophies.

As he walked home he thought the whole matter over and was compelled to admire the ingenuity of the boys in arranging their plans, but because they had been ingenious he did not mean to let them get the best of him.

He spent the next two days making his own preparations, as he knew his enemies were making theirs. He also arranged with his mother for an absence possibly of two or three days, or even a week, as he said, making her believe that he was going out to camp on a fishing excursion with a party from the city.

At daylight on Saturday Jerry started off for the lake, fully equipped for a week's camp in the woods.

The boys had their scouts out and it was soon reported to those who were in the game that Jerry had started for the woods. Only those were notified who were to take part in the adventure, and the lads had been very secret in all their movements.

Jerry had watched them and knew that they had carried out their plans well.

No one knew the lake and its surroundings better than

Jerry, and upon arriving at the place he set his trap for his tormentors as carefully as though trapping for a fox, and all the time he was laughing and muttering: "So they will paint their faces, eh? and no one will recognize them. I can't swear to their identity—that is what they said. Well, we'll see about the paint."

Jerry placed his trap on a piece of rock which was walled on either side by high cliffs—too high for any one to climb—and a person once on the rock could only leave it by returning the way he came or by a plunge into the lake. We will here state that Jerry knew all the boys well—knew all their points, good and bad, and all their accomplishments.

From the rock to the water was a distance of twenty feet, and on every side the lake was surrounded by high cliffs—great walls of rock—and a person going into the lake from the side on which our hero had located could only get out by swimming the lake to the opposite shore. The distance across the lake was not great, but it was at least a mile and a half around it, and that is the walk one would have to take to regain a position one side or the other from any given point.

Having set his trap, as our hero said, he retired into the woods, and what he set about doing will be revealed as our narrative advances.

In due time the boys from the village arrived at the lake, and they set to work in high glee to cover their faces with paint, and they stuck feathers in their hair and assumed the colored muslin clothes they had made for effect and to assist in their delusion. When they were all arrayed and painted they did look in a superficial way very much like a squad of young Indians.

They were all delighted, and one of them said:

"Won't we have fun?"

"Won't we?" chimed in another.

"We will, we will," joined in a third lad.

Bierge was in high glee. One of the boys asked him:

"Can we find Jerry?"

"Can we find him? Certainly we can find him, and we will have him here all to ourselves. We will try him Indian fashion and make believe we are going to burn him at the stake. We'll just frighten the life out of him and make him confess all the sins of his past life. We will make him apologize for every deed he ever committed. We will terrorize him almost to death."

"And are we sure to find him?"

"Certainly we are. And now, boys, are you all ready?"

"We are all ready."

"No more talk now in English. Remember, we are Indians. You all have your orders and know what to do, and to-day will be the great day of your lives. We will avenge all our grudges, and we may do the state a service in unearthing a crime."

Thus spoke Bierge, and there was a criminal overheard every word he said. Later on our readers will know why we say there was a criminal that overheard every word that was spoken.

The boys were all very hilarious in anticipation of the great tar and feather act. They had brought their tar and their feathers, and they did, as intimated, present a very formidable appearance.

"Where is he?" cried one of the boys.

"There is his basket and all his things ready for fishing," said Bierge.

"But where is he?"

"We will play Indian on him."

"How?"

"See the bushes under the cliff?"

"Yes."

"We will all go and hide ourselves in the bushes and lay

low until he comes. He is not far away, you bet. Then when he gets all fixed ready to fish, with a yell we will leap out upon him, and some of you must see that he does not escape."

"He can't escape."

"He might."

"How?"

"He is a great swimmer. He might leap into the lake."

"We can guard against that."

The boys stole toward the rock entrance. They moved in single file and with great care, and soon were all hidden in the undergrowth under the cliff. They were giggling and laughing at a great rate, so that Bierge was compelled to warn them to make less noise, and there they lay snuggled up all nice for their anticipated fun. Well, they had fun enough a few moments later. They were on the alert and heard a crushing through the bushes back from the opening to the gorge, and Bierge said:

"Here he comes; now all be ready."

A moment passed; all was still and Bierge queried:

"I wonder if he could have seen us?"

Even as he asked the question there came a noise very strange and peculiar, and one of the lads asked:

"What was that?"

Bierge was very pale, and his voice trembled as he answered:

"By ginger! boys, that sounds like a bear."

The giggling immediately ceased. Although the lads had been raised thereabouts none of them had ever encountered a wild bear, and they all indulged the old fancy that a bear would hug man or boy to death. Their faces became pale and their limbs trembled.

"It can't be a bear," said one.

"They don't come down in this part of the country," said another.

"You can't tell about that," remarked a third. "I've heard that sometimes hunger will drive them right into the towns."

"Boys," said one, "if that is a bear we had better slide away from here. He has smelled us out."

"It is possible it was the bear that drove Jerry away from his tackle."

One of the boys moaned: "I wish Jerry was here to protect us. I've heard that he has tackled bears when he went off into the woods with hunting parties."

All the lads were very uncomfortable. They had no weapons with them, and in a hand to hand encounter with a big bear they felt they had no chance.

The noise had stopped, and Bierge said:

"Maybe we were mistaken."

"You step out and see," said Ennie Stoop.

"No, you step out, Ennie."

"What! do you want to make bait of me?"

"No, but you can find out."

"There is no bear."

"Then step out and prove it."

"Why don't you step out and prove it?"

"I am in command."

"Oh!"

"Yes, it wouldn't be right for the captain to expose himself."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"There is no bear."

At that instant there came a contradiction to the statement, for the bear was plainly heard, and he appeared to be much nearer than when his roar first fell upon their ears.

The boys all felt queer until Bierge said:

"Let's all step out together."

"You go first, we'll follow."

"No, you go first. I am the captain."

"You are a poor captain. Why don't you lead your men?"

"You lead 'em."

"Will you make me captain?"

"Yes."

Ennie Stoop was really a braver boy than Bierge, but not so smart. He did not believe it was a bear. He suspected it was a stray cow, or calf, or pig, or possibly a colt, indeed he did not think it possible that there could be a bear anywhere in the vicinity.

"You're a coward, Bierge," he said.

Bierge inwardly made up his mind that he would hold Stoop responsible for that charge some day; but he was a coward and did not dare resent the accusation at that moment.

"Oh, you always were brave."

"I am not afraid of a bear, anyhow. You are."

"Then tackle him."

"I will. I'll lead the way, you fellows follow."

Stoop stepped out on the rock. He stood there and looked around. There came no sound and he called:

"Come out here, you fellows. What's the matter with you?"

One of the boys stepped out from the bushes and another followed, and Bierge stepped out and had the gall to say:

"I was only testing you, Stoop."

"Oh! you were only testing me?"

"Yes."

"I'll test you."

"How?"

"The roar came from that clump of bushes."

"Yes."

"Go and see what is there. I dare you."

"You dare me?"

"Yes, I do. I dare you."

CHAPTER V.

THE INDIANS SEE A BEAR AND MAKE A RUSH.

THE boys all had their eyes on Bierge. He had been their leader for a long time. There always had been a little jealousy between Stoop and himself. He did not like to be dared. He had had time to consider and he did not see how it was possible that there could be a bear in that part of the country. Stoop reiterated:

"Yes, I dare you. If you don't go I will."

"Go where?"

"Go and poke in the bushes there."

"You dare me?"

"Yes."

"You're smart, you are."

"You dare not go there. You are a coward."

"I'll go, and I'll hold you to that charge of cowardice. Twice you've called me a coward."

Bierge was very pale.

"You dare not go," taunted Stoop.

All was still. If the bear was there he was "laying low."

"I'll go."

"Let's see you."

"I will in a minute."

The boys all stood looking expectantly and finally Stoop said:

"Your minute is up."

"I know it."

"Why don't you go?"

"I will."

"Then go. I dare you."

Bierge assumed a very bold air and said:

"You dare not go yourself and I'll show you how to do it. The boys are all witnesses that you did not dare go."

"I'll go if you dare me."

"I won't dare you, I'll go myself."

"Then go. I dare you."

Bierge moved forward. He was very shaky, but with trembling step proceeded toward the clump of bushes. He was within a few feet when with a roar a bear—a veritable bear, as it appeared — did spring forth. Bierge uttered a yell of terror. He fell to the ground and rolled over and over toward the boys, and the bear followed. The lads were all hedged in; there was but one road of escape, and one of the lads set the pace. He ran and made a dive off the rock into the lake. He for one preferred a good ducking in his feathers and paint to a death hug in a bear's fore legs. The other boys, with yells of terror, and frantic and bewildered, all followed. Even Stoop took the dive, and Bierge, screaming and yelling in wild fright, rolled toward the cliff and over he went. Six stout lads were all swimming for dear life toward the opposite shore, and there stood the bear. He had picked up some of their belongings and he waved them at the retreating lads. Then Mr. Bear shed his bear skin and stood revealed as Jerry Cushman, the terror of the town; and never had he more singularly earned his title, for he had terrorized six boys, including his two bitterest enemies, and had caused them, in wild disorder and with yells of dismay, to plunge into the lake. There he stood, shouting, laughing and dancing with glee.

The boys realized the trick that had been played upon

them. They stopped in mid-lake to look at him. They were all good swimmers—Jerry knew that when he conceived his scheme of forcing them to dive into the cold water.

The boys in the water were not so far off that Jerry could not talk to them, and he called out:

"Wash your faces, boys; wash off the Indian. You're no good; you're palefaces, you are. Ha! ha! ha!"

The jeered lads were powerless. They could not return to the cliff; they would be compelled, as we have stated, to walk half the circuit of the lake after swimming to the opposite shore before they could regain the point from where they had made the plunge.

"You will tar and feather me, eh? Well, you mean cowards, swim, swim, or you'll drown. Hello, Bierge, are you captain?"

"I'll meet you yet."

"Will you?"

"Yes I will."

"I'd like to meet you alone once, captain; yes, just once. I'd make you remember me."

"You can't fight me."

"That's so; you will never give me a chance except when you have your gang with you, but you and I will meet some day."

Bierge was much larger and stronger than Jerry, and he had kicked and cuffed the latter so often he did not think Jerry had any pluck at all.

"Oh, what a laugh I've had! go home, you palefaces, and tell your friends how you killed a bear."

Stoop called to Bierge:

"Let's land on the opposite shore and go round and hunt him down."

"We'll do it."

"You'll hunt me down will you? Well, come on, but

wash your faces first. Oh, how funny you fellows do look!"

The boys in the water did look funny, all besmeared as they were with running paint.

Jerry stood there and jeered them to his heart's content, and occasionally he would take up his bear skin and wave it at them in derision.

"We can trail him."

"Yes, and whale him."

"We can."

"Let's do it."

The boys swam to the opposite side. Some of them had already reached the level shore of the lake and were shivering in the cold, for it was not midsummer.

Jerry was not dismayed at the idea of being hunted down. He was up in arms for his own revenge, and he was a regular woodsman. The village boys could never catch him unless he permitted them to do so. It was his day. He had a plan in his mind and he hoped they would try to hunt him down. There were two of those fellows he desired to catch alone. He had old scores to settle and he was willing to brave all consequences in order to get square, he had suffered so much at their hands.

Jerry walked away from the rock. He secreted his belongings, including his bear skin, and then he wandered off into the woods, and in due time the drenched lads, or a part of them, returned to the rock. One or two had had enough of the excursion; they were wet through, cold and hungry.

The boys who were prepared to go with the hunt held a consultation. Any one of them felt himself a match for the fugitive. As intimated, at different times nearly all of them had had a shy at him. They had done so, however, when there were two or three of them together.

"We can't find him," said Stoop; "he is a regular woodsman."

"I'll find him," said Bierge. "I can neither eat nor sleep until I do find him. Just to think how he has served us all out! Twice he's had the laugh on us."

"When we do catch him how we'll whale him, eh?"

"We will."

"Now then scatter, boys. We can run him down."

The boys all arranged signals, and when one of them came upon the fugitive he was to give the signal.

Off they started with a great whoop, their courage renewed, and burning for revenge.

Well, Jerry was on the alert. He was prepared to be caught, under certain conditions. He knew he could outrun any lad in the party in case he made a mistake, so he just lay low to carry out his plan.

The boys were to travel in pairs and two pairs started—Bierge and one fellow, and Stoop with another. They found a trail, and burning for revenge, as indicated, they struck into the woods. At length they came to a place where the trail divided. Stoop was to go one way with his partner and Bierge the other, and they were to meet at a certain point. Bierge, as he went along, said to his friend:

"Oh, I only hope we catch him, you and I."

"I hope we do."

"I want him all to myself. I'll warm him well, I will."

"You can get away with him?"

"Can I? Well, just let me come up with him; that's all I ask."

"By ginger! Bierge, look there."

The comrade of Bierge pointed toward a little rise of ground and there stood Jerry looking at them, as cool as a cucumber.

"Why, there he is, by thunder!"

"Yes, there he is."

"He's a runner."

"But he don't act as though he were about to run."

"We'll go for him."

"Straight."

"He may fight back," said Bierge.

"It looks that way."

"We'll go for him together."

"Is that your plan?"

"Yes."

"I thought you wanted to act alone and lay him out."

"But we can warm him good if we both pitch in."

The two boys approached, and Jerry stood as cool as a cucumber to receive them. He showed no signs of running away and a moment later the three boys stood face to face.

"Now I've got you," said Bierge.

"Yes, you've got me."

"Down on your knees."

"Down on my knees?" repeated Jerry.

"Yes; do you hear me?"

"I do. But why should I get down on my knees?"

"Beg my pardon."

"Beg your pardon?" again repeated Jerry.

"Yes, beg my pardon."

"Oh, no, no. You were going to warm me; I am here to let you do it."

"I will."

"All right, start in."

Bierge did not feel comfortable after all his boasting. There was something of a freezing nature in Jerry's absolute coolness.

"If you will beg my pardon I'll let up on you," said Bierge.

"You will?"

"Yes."

"You are very kind. But, Bierge, do you know what I think you?"

"Don't be saucy."

"I think you're the meanest skunk on top of the earth, and think your uncle is a villain. Is that begging your pardon? If it is you are welcome."

"I can warm you, Jerry."

"Can you?"

"Haven't I done it many a time?"

"Yes, you have; but you won't do it to-day."

"I will if you don't beg my pardon."

"There are two of you, and I tell you I think you are the meanest skunk alive.

"Look out."

"Come on."

"Go for him," urged the companion of Bierge.

"I will if he don't ask my pardon."

"You're a skunk—do you hear? And now come on; I am ready for you."

The lad who was with Bierge really had more spunk than his so-called captain, and he said:

"Don't say anything to me, Jerry."

"You? why, you're no good. You are not any better than Bierge."

Jerry advanced toward the two lads, and Bierge, feeling a sudden inspiration of courage, leaped forward and struck at our hero. The latter dodged the blow and then he sailed in, and he just gave Bierge one of the best drubbings any lad had ever received.

The comrade of Bierge at the start had offered to take a hand in, but he got a crack square on the nose which drew blood and caused his face to swell. He had enough—all fight was taken out of him. He just blubbered like the lummox he was, and the tough little Jerry paid his attention to Bierge, and he just welted the coward well. Bierge, after the first clip or two, did not offer any resistance and Jerry had it all his own way, and then he retali-

ated. He had provided himself with some tar and he just besmeared both the lads well—not on their clothes, but all over their faces. He made a show of them, and Bierge and his comrade took it, and when our hero had enjoyed himself to the full he coolly walked away with the remark:

"Now, Bierge, you have had your Saturday afternoon's fun. Go home and tell your uncle what a nice time you have had."

Bierge, all broke up, started toward the rendezvous and met his companions, at least the two who had remained behind, and he met the aggravating query:

"Did you catch him?"

"Yes, we caught him," answered Bierge's companion, "and here we are."

The boys could not help but laugh, their companions presented such a sorry appearance.

"Yes, you met him. Where is Stoop?"

"He may meet him yet," said Bierge, and there was considerable malevolence in the tones of his voice.

Stoop had struck a trail and followed it up. He too met Jerry, or rather Jerry met him. We will not go into details, but Stoop was served out in just as bad a manner as Bierge, and half an hour or so after the return of the first party Stoop showed up, and he was in a sorry plight.

"Did you meet him?" was the question addressed to Stoop, and his answer was:

"Yes, we met him. Where is Bierge?"

Bierge had crawled out of sight in sheer mortification at the approach of Stoop, whose call had been heard some distance off; but when he saw how Stoop had been served out he showed up.

The four lads did indeed present a sorry sight, and Stoop said:

"Bierge, you put up this scheme, and we've got the worst of it."

"We will get square."

"Will we?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"That fellow has assailed us. He is a regular desperado. He had a club and knocked Dick and I down. Didn't he Dick?"

"Yes," answered Dick, willing to save his reputation under the cover of his friend's lie.

"He knocked us down with a club too," said Stoop, and he also appealed to his companion, who, like the other handy boy, assented to the lie.

"He is a regular ruffian."

"He is."

"We can send him to jail."

"We can."

"We will."

"We will, sure."

The lads started for their homes, and it was late in the afternoon when they reached the village, and they told a terrible tale. They had all agreed to tell the one story and stick to it, and the story was that they had gone fishing when Jerry came down upon them with a club and assailed them in detail.

Old Bierge and old Stoop held a consultation that night. A formal complaint was made and a warrant issued for Jerry's arrest. All the men denounced the whole affair as an outrage, declared that something must be done to protect their children against the young desperado, Jerry Cushman, the terror of the town. The constable visited the Cushman home with his warrant. Jerry was not at home, and the man told the story of Jerry's outrageous conduct. The good mother protested that she did not believe it, that if Jerry really had done anything he had acted in self-defense.

"I will arrest him," said the constable, and he went away.

Mrs. Cushman was very unhappy. She saw that the consequences would be very serious, whether Jerry had acted in self-defense or not.

CHAPTER VI.

JERRY CONTINUES A FUGITIVE, BUT HAS HIS OWN FUN.

After the departure of the constable the mother sat brooding. She revolved in her mind all the possible evils that might follow this determination to arrest her son. She realized with great bitterness the helplessness of poverty in sickness and trouble—money can purchase a great many alleviations—and she muttered:

"It's terrible to be poor. Oh, how much suffering a little money can dispel! Here is my poor Jerry, a noble boy at heart, hounded and abused because he is poor. I would he had died an infant in my arms, ere he should have lived to suffer as they will make him suffer; and it is all that man Bierge. I shall never forget the hour when he told me he would make my life a hell on earth. I did not realize then how he could do it. I could not foresee how he could make a fool of my husband and a fugitive of my unborn son, and now he will carry his revenge to the utmost extreme. I wonder what the charge is against poor Jerry? No matter what his sin may be I know he has been driven to it, but that knowledge does not lessen the anguish our present position causes."

Even while the mother spoke—and it was after midnight—Jerry stole into the room.

"Oh, my son, is it you?"

"Yes, mamma, I came home to tell you all about it."

"What have you done, Jerry?"

"Nothing unlawful."

"My son, there is a warrant for your arrest."

"I know it."

"Then you must not stay here. You must go to Boston and join your father."

"Yes, mamma, I will go to Boston."

"If it is not a serious crime they will not pursue you to Boston."

"No, mamma, they will not pursue me to Boston, and I really feel quite happy. If it weren't for you I should feel really gleeful, for I have had a glorious day."

"How have you spent the day, my son?"

"Let me tell you all about it, mamma."

"I fear, my son, to have you remain here. This house may be under surveillance."

"No, mamma, the lazy constable is in his bed. The squire also is asleep. All the town is asleep. We are safe until daylight. You need have no apprehension, and I shall give you a good laugh, and you must laugh, mamma. Yes, you must enjoy it. Our laugh is all the poor have, and our triumph over wrong. Now you should feel real happy. Your good old colonial blood should assert itself, and you should rejoice that although we are poor the rich and malignant do not have all the satisfaction and triumph over us. They didn't have it to-day; I enjoyed myself to-day."

Jerry proceeded and told his mother of the plot to tar and feather him.

"Oh, the malicious wretches!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, it was all malice and malignity. And would you have had me hold my hands, bow my head, and let them abuse me?"

"No, my son."

"You would rather I would become a fugitive for a little while?"

"Yes, my son. I would not have you quietly submit to such an outrage, and it is unlawful."

"I know it, mamma; but you know law is to punish the poor and protect the rich."

"It is not so intended."

"That is all right; but here is where money asserts itself as in everything else. They might have tarred and feathered me and when I went for a warrant I would have been laughed at, and there is a law which lies above and beyond the courts."

"The law of self-defense, my son?"

"Yes, mamma, and that is the law to which I appealed, and I backed it up with my own ingenuity and courage, and I came out on top."

"I am glad, my son."

"They did not tar and feather me."

"I am glad, my son."

"They never will tar and feather me, mamma, and they will never catch me and put me in jail. I defy them all."

"You must go away, my son—go to Boston."

"Yes, I will go to Boston; but, mamma, I desire to prepare you."

"For what?"

"For all manner of things you will hear after I am gone away. Yes, they may get up all kinds of stories, but you must not believe them. You will know I am in Boston, and they will get up these tales to frighten you and make you uncomfortable when I am well away."

"I see, my son."

Jerry proceeded and told his mother of the events of the day, and his account was so graphic and amusing that his mother really did laugh, and she patted Jerry on the head and said:

"I am proud of you, my son; yes, I am proud of you."

"You often told me, mamma, how my ancestors, years ago, fought the Indians."

"Yes, and you have their blood and spirit in you."

"Yes, mamma, and I fought the Indians to-day. I didn't wipe them out—I left them to wipe themselves."

Both mother and son laughed and Jerry said:

"I have the spirit of seventy-six in me, mamma. Never mind the seventy, I played old Harry with the six.

"You did, my son."

"And now remember, mamma, you must not worry about me. I am going to Boston."

"Yes, you must go, my son."

"They will seek to scare you, but you must not be scared. If I don't go to Boston I will steal in here and see you, and if I do not come no matter what you hear you can conclude that I am in Boston."

"I got a letter from your papa to-day."

"Well?"

"He is sticking to his good resolves. He said he wished you were in Boston."

"I will be there, mamma. Yes, I will be there; and now, mamma, promise me that you will not worry, no matter what you hear."

"I will try not to worry, my son; yes, I will try."

"And you must try to succeed, mamma, and in the end all will be well. And now I must leave you."

"Where will you go, my son?"

"To Boston, mamma; yes, to Boston."

"How will you get there?"

"Walk."

"Walk to Boston, my son?"

"Yes; papa did, I can."

"Oh, this is terrible."

"It is just lovely, mamma; and remember how I fixed the Indians and the six desperadoes."

"They may pursue you, my son."

"Let 'em; they will never catch me. I can beat them all."

Jerry went up to his room. He secured some things that he needed. In fact he had been carrying things to the woods for days, and he had a home in a cave near the lake—a place where he could hide against and away from all the constables in the country.

Later the lad descended and said:

"Now, mamma, you go to bed, and remember, do not worry about me. No news direct from me is good news, and if anything really does happen to me I will communicate with you direct, and as long as you do not hear from me direct, as I said, you will know that everything is all right with me."

Our readers may not understand Jerry's anxiety to allay all future fear as concerned him in his mother's mind. We will explain his persistence. The lad did intend to go to Boston, but before going he meant to become the terror of the town indeed. He intended to get square with every man, woman and child who had ever done any harm to him or his parents. "I am an outlaw now," he had said to himself, "and I will have the game as well as the name. I am in for retaliation. I will call it revenge, but we have been long-suffering. We have stood a great deal. They have had their turn; it is ours now. If I am to be driven out of my native town I'll leave a sweet recollection behind me. I'll make old Bierge sweat. I know a great deal. I know that he is the archfiend who has made my mother's life miserable. He has made a wreck of my papa, a fugitive of me. Well, I will pay him back a little; yes, just a little."

"My son, it breaks my heart to see you driven away."

"Mamma, I am doing no good here. I may secure a situation in Boston. Papa may, and we may make a nice

home there for you and you can be somebody once more, not the poor frightened lady you have been all these years."

A little later Jerry stole forth. He started on the tramp to his cave, which he had fixed up very comfortably.

Jerry had one friend in the town. She was a poor girl, the daughter of the town shoemaker. Her grandfather had been a member of congress and a great manufacturer He had failed late in life and his son became a poor shoemaker, a weak, well-meaning man. He was a widower with one child, a daughter. Ida and Jerry had long been friends. The girl was only twelve and a half years of age, but adversity and want had educated her far beyond her years. A sort of common fate had drawn Ida and Jerry together, and often they had gone off into the woods and had talked over their sorrows and their anticipations. Ida was our hero's only confidant save his mother.

Ida Drew was our hero's spy. She was unsuspected and gathered all the information she could, and was in the habit of meeting Jerry and detailing to him all she learned. Jerry had seen Ida by appointment earlier in the evening. She had gone out to meet him and from her he learned of the issuance of the warrant, and she also had repeated to him a great deal of the general town talk.

Jerry returned to the lakeside and stowed himself away in his cave, and while he lay there quietly and peacefully sleeping, his enemies were setting a trap to catch him. At daylight the constable appeared at the house, accompanied by Bierge. He demanded to know where Jerry was hidden.

"I cannot tell you," said Mrs. Cushman.

"This will not do, madam," put in Bierge.

The man was always very formal when he addressed Mrs. Cushman.

"You have hounded my boy and you have driven him away from me."

"Constable," said Bierge, "you have the right to search this shanty."

The man laid particular stress upon the word shanty. It was a derision toward the woman who many years previously had refused to become his wife.

"You can search my house if you choose, but I tell you my son is not here."

The two men went through the house and during their tour Bierge made a great many insulting, cruel comments. The search was fruitless. They did not find Jerry, and Bierge said:

"It makes no difference. We will catch him sooner or later."

"You are a cruel man, Bierge," said Jerry's mother.

"If I was half as cruel to yours as you have been to yourself I would be a cruel man. To think of your marrying that worthless Cushman, and then to have such a son as your Jerry! That boy will go to jail or some reformatory asylum."

"No doubt if you had your way he would, but you will not have your own way, and retribution will overtake you some day."

"Constable," said Bierge, "listen and remember that woman threatens me."

"I don't call that a threat," said the constable. "She is only telling you what may happen, and I'll tell you, Bierge, it's misfortune enough for Mrs. Cushman to have a worthless husband and a bad son, and it does not become you to twit her."

"She has threatened me."

"I don't see it."

"Mrs. Cushman, mark my words; we will catch that vagabond son of yours, and what's more we will have the mystery of your husband's disappearance cleared up. The squire says that must be explained."

"You and the squire may go too far, Bierge. I am not altogether friendless, and some day both you and the squire may be called to a reckoning.

"Hear, hear; there she threatens the squire and me. I will remember your words, madam."

The two men went away and Mrs. Cushman entered her home to weep, but later in the day she received something that cheered her up. A letter came from her husband; in it he said:

"Something great for us has occurred. I cannot tell you now, as I have not all the particulars; but we will resume our former position in a few months. And, my dear, remember I will never taste another drop of liquor as long as I live. In sorrow or prosperity, in life or in death from this time out I am a sober man, and I will yet make up to you and my son all the misery I have caused you, all the disgrace I have brought upon you. Wine is a mocker, but it shall never mock me again. All will soon be well, and we can laugh in the faces of those who despised us, and maybe go riding past them in our own carriage. Keep up a good heart. I tell you something great has happened for us.

"YOUR HUSBAND."

CHAPTER VII.

BIERGE IS DRUNK AGAIN.

IT WAS well on in the morning when Jerry awoke. He had enjoyed a good long sleep and felt greatly refreshed. He had plenty to eat in his cave. He had trapped a rabbit, and with bow and arrow had knocked over a couple of quail; and he had brought bread from the house.

The moment he had concluded his breakfast he set to

work on a new contrivance. He had learned that Bierge, wedded to his idols, had resumed his visits to the neighboring town, and he intended to lay low for him.

At the end of the week Jerry had his contrivance complete, and Saturday evening he went over to a place on the road and prepared for his great surprise for old Bierge.

We will here state that a constant search for Jerry had been going on. His home had been watched and while the men—his enemies—were doing the walking Jerry was resting cozily in his little cave retreat.

Bierge had offered a reward of ten dollars, through the squire, for the capture of Jerry, but up to the time when Jerry started in to work surprise number two on Bierge, no one had earned the ten dollars.

Bierge visited the adjacent town. He had been off his liquor for quite a period for him, so when he started in again he got quite a "jag" on, as the topers say, and in this condition he started for his home, and he had a bottle in his coat, determined to make up for lost time.

Jerry was ready when he heard Bierge coming along the road. We cannot say as much for the lawyer, but he appeared to be quite happy and really unconcerned. He appeared also to have forgotten all about the ditch which overflowed on him upon a former occasion. On he came; the night was dark and he had reached the given point when suddenly he gave one yell and stood rooted to the spot, powerless to move. His hair stood on end and his heart stood still. There in the road before him was a gigantic figure, apparently a monument of fire in human semblance, and, as stated, of gigantic proportions. From the fiery mouth of the fiery monster came, in tones hoarse and terrible, the words:

"Bierge, you villain, I've only a little while longer to wait for you. Ha! ha! ha!"

The man was paralyzed and could not move when the

great figure approached him, but in sheer weakness he fell to his knees.

"You rascal, you cold-blooded rascal! Yes, cold-blooded, for even rum don't warm the crocodile fluid that flows through your veins. Your time is near at hand. You have oppressed and robbed the poor; you have gloated over your ill-gotten gains, and now I am gloating over the prospect of having you all to myself. You are coming, you rascal; yes, coming very soon, and I rejoice. Yes, I rejoice. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Mercy!" pleaded Bierge, finding voice.

"Oh, you need not appeal to me for mercy. I do not know what mercy means; I never knew the quality of mercy. There I am like you, or rather you are like me. Ha! ha! ha!"

"I'll reform," moaned Bierge.

"What will you do?"

"I'll reform."

"You will?"

"I will, I will."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the monster.

"Yes, I mean it. I will reform. Oh, spare me!"

"Spare you? Man, did you ever spare any one? No, no; but you are coming to me; yes, you are coming to me and I am delighted. You shall be a sweet morsel. I'll consume you to keep up my illumination. Yes, I illuminate my body with rascals like you but you will be an ever burning candle. You will never be snuffed out—you will burn, burn, burn, and I will laugh, laugh, laugh. Ha! ha! ha!"

Bierge was speechless, and fell over in the road in a dead faint. And then from the fiery monster our friend Jerry emerged, and he set to work. He just painted the face of his victim in fine style. He made a minstrel—a black minstrel—of Bierge in no time. Then he tatooed him, all

over his body, and the black he put upon his victim's face was walnut stain—a stain that would not wash off. He made a negro of the lawyer, and then with a natural laugh he seized his disguise, an ingeniously constructed affair, and moved away to his cave, trudging through the night.

Bierge in time recovered from his swoon and looked around. He did not know whether he had dreamed, or had really seen a fiery monster and had really listened to terrible, very terrible, words of warning. Weak, and worn, and sober, he rose to his feet. He moved forward cautiously and with trembling, and the first thing he discovered was that he had broken his flask and the hot liquor had run down his limbs.

"Curse the stuff," he cried, "I am glad it's gone; but I wish it hadn't broken in my clothes, for Mrs. Bierge will discover from the odor that I have been on a drunk and—Well, well, it will be worse for me here than it will be hereafter, with the fiery monster, burning and burning and not to be snuffed out. Oh, dear me! why didn't I stay home?"

The man moved on and in good time arrived at his home. We will here state that Mrs. Bierge had always had perfect confidence in her husband. She was one who retired early. She was a wonderful sleeper, and on this her husband presumed, and because of this fact he carried on his deception with impunity for years; but upon this particular night she did not sleep, and she sat up awaiting her husband. He had made her think that he had business over in the adjacent town every Saturday. She was an avaricious woman; on this also her husband traded. She believed it was profitable business that took him away and kept him out late. But the good woman had eaten a green apple. It was a lively apple; when it got down to her stomach it set to work and it made things lively all round. And as our readers will learn, we mean what we

say when we declare that the apple made things lively all round. It did; yes, it broke up the deception of many years; it tore off a mask; it raised old daddy inside and outside—inside for Mrs. Bierge and outside for Mr. Bierge. As intimated, the woman could not sleep, and was wide awake when her husband returned. She sat in the dining-room and had turned down the light, desiring to give her husband a pleasant surprise—she did not anticipate an unpleasant one for herself. She had often and often reproached herself for her sleepiness. She had often said it was her duty to sit up for her overworked husband. She had told him so and he had been free to forgive and excuse her; but upon this particular night she sat up. She would atone for all her former neglect, and prove her love and devotion; and she determined never to say anything about the lively green apple whose mission it had been to keep her aroused to a sense of duty.

Bierge entered the house—entered on tiptoe as usual. The force of habit is great; it had been his habit to enter on tiptoe. All was dark in the sitting-room; the light burned low on the table.

As our readers can understand, Bierge was all "broke up" and all "shook up," but even a greater "shake up" awaited him as he turned up the light and beheld his wife sitting there like a ghost; for the lively apple had left her looking very pale. Well, a young cyclone followed. Bierge yelled in amazement, and his wife screeched in terror. She rose to her feet, and, pointing at him, screeched as stated, and screech followed screech. Bierge stood spellbound, and finally managed to demand:

"Woman, what in thunder ails you?"

"Ails me? ails me, you rascal? Is this the way you treat me?"

"Treat you how?"

"How, you cruel, vile man? Here I, your patient wife,

sit up to await your return far into the morning, and you come home here to play this horrible joke on me. But I am not scared; no, no, I am not scared. I'm mad; yes, mad. How dare you?"

"My dear, what do you mean? What ails you?"

"What ails me? Man, are you drunk?"

"Drunk, my dear? No, no."

"Not drunk?"

"No."

"You are perfectly sober?"

"I was never drunk in my life."

"Never drunk in your life?"

"Never."

"And you are not drunk now?"

"On my honor, no."

"And you haven't been drunk?"

"No."

"Then you blacked your own face when you were perfectly sober and came home here to frighten your wife after midnight?"

"Blacked my face?"

"Yes."

"Dear me! what can you mean?"

"Oh, dear me! Bierge, I see it all; yes, I see all. I smell more; yes, I smell the whisky. You are innocent one way, but guilty the other. Yes, you poor fool, you have been lying drunk somewhere and some one has blacked your face. You, poor inebriate, have sobered up without knowing that a mean trick has been played on you."

"My dear, you are crazy."

Mrs. Bierge was a big woman, and very peppery, and when her husband told her she was crazy her mad was up. She hauled off in her frenzy and dealt him a blow on the side of the head that knocked him sideways to the floor.

"How dare you tell me I am crazy, you villain? How

dare you? after coming home here to insult me in this manner. I'll teach you to tell me I am crazy."

Bierge rose from the floor completely subdued. It was the first time in years he had encountered such treatment from his wife. When they were younger and poor—before he had robbed—she used to buffet him occasionally, and, as stated, he arose completely subdued. And yet, being in a dazed condition, he asked:

"Have you been drinking, my dear?"

Mrs. Bierge screeched again and went for him, and she dragged him to a mirror and seizing the lamp from the table exclaimed:

"Look there, you miserable deceiver, and try to face me down. Look at yourself, you nigger."

The man did look, and over his mind indistinct recollections floated. He was a coward, but a very shrewd man, and he discerned how the fiery phantom had been a trick and a device. He appreciated how he must have fallen, possibly unconscious, in the road, and then—yes, and then Jerry, the terror of the town, had gotten in his work; for Bierge was quick to decide that he had been the victim of a trick by that ingenious and mischievous lad, who had come the bear trick over his npehew and the squire's son.

He had got it good; he realized that, for there he stood, and beheld his temporarily black visage in the glass, and beside his black face was the face of his wife, singularly white save where it was discolored by the blue swelling veins of passion.

"Do you see?" she demanded.

"Yes, I see."

"Do you smell?"

"Yes, I smell."

"What do you see?"

"My face is blacked."

"What do you smell?"

"Whisky."

Bierge was becoming desperate.

"And what does it all mean?"

"It means, my dear, that your husband is an abused man."

"Oh! it does?"

We cannot put on record the sarcasm in the woman's tones.

"Yes, my dear, I am your overworked husband. I spent hours to-day over a case that will bring me in a thousand dollars if I win it. I drank one glass of ale. Yes, I couldn't eat, I was so weary, and on my way home I sat down beside the road and fell asleep. Some one found me there—an enemy. He blacked my face, he spilled his own whisky all over me to deceive you."

"He did?"

Well, there was thunder in the woman's tones as she spoke.

"Yes, my dear."

"See here, Bierge, old topers don't throw their good whisky away to deceive anxious wives; no, no, you can't give that tale to me. And a man who is sober does not sleep peacefully on while enemies are besmearing his face all over with greased burnt cork."

"My dear, I know appearances are against me."

"Oh! you know it?"

"I do."

"How can you help knowing appearances are against you, with that black face on you? Yes, appearances are against you in more ways than one, and not only appearances but the fumes are against you. Yes, sir, the fumes; not those that come from the broken bottle you had hidden away in your clothes, but from your mouth and from between your blackened lips. And now, sir, I'll wash this

disgrace off your face—your can never wash the humiliation out of my mind. Come here."

The woman seized her husband by the collar and gave him a vicious jerk. She dragged him to the kitchen pump and then she began to scrub, when lo, the black stuck. She scrubbed and scrubbed while poor Bierge, unable to endure it quietly, squealed in pain, and the woman cried out:

"Well, I declare, man, you are blacked for life; you are stained. It will never come off, and from this out I, a white woman, will have a black man for a husband—a genuine black man; not a negro, but a black man. Oh, the disgrace! the disgrace! I could kill you."

The woman did almost kill the man, for in her anger she batted him again and again; and then she scrubbed, and then she screeched in anger, and again she scrubbed, and still again she batted him, until he could stand it no longer, and forgetting himself he swung his hand around and dealt her a back-handed blow, and then the row commenced.

"You miserable black brute," she cried, and she went for him. She pulled his hair, she struck him, she gouged him until he fell upon his knees and begged for mercy.

"To-morrow is Sunday," she said, "and I have invited the parson to tea, and you—well, what a sight you are for a parson to see. He will think I am living with a devil; I will lose my character for saintliness. Yes, you villain! you villain! now confess or I'll murder you and bury you in the cellar under the cider, I will; the devil shoot me if I don't. There! see, hear, you rascal! I am becoming a female devil. I actually swore—I will go to the bad place, and all for you, for you."

Each time the woman said "you" she dealt the man a whack; indeed she had whacked about all the breath out of his body in her delirium of rage. She had almost made

him a fit subject to be buried in the cellar under the cider barrel.

At length she desisted and said:

"Now then, confess."

The man's spirit was all gone and he cried out:

"Forgive me and I will confess."

"Do so; confess everything."

"I will, I will."

"Proceed."

Bierge told his story. He claimed that he had been at work on a law case, but admitted that he had drank several glasses of whisky and pleaded that owing to the fact that he was not a habitual drinker it had overcome him. He claimed he had fallen asleep on the road home. He did not tell about the fiery phantom. He did not dare tell that lest his wife should think that he was a habitual drinker; but he admitted being in a drunken stupor.

"How do you know," she demanded, "that this was not done in the town before every one?"

"No, my dear, I know it was not. Only two persons know of my plight."

"And who are those two persons?"

"You, and the devil who did it."

"You are sure of that?"

"I am."

"You'll swear?"

"I will."

"Oh, you wretch! this will be the death of me."

We will not attempt to discern what might have been in Bierge's inmost heart all that time, what unspoken wish he indulged.

"We can wash it all off, my dear."

"We can?"

"Yes."

"I can't."

"I can."

"Get to work, then, get to work, or I'll bury you, I will, by thunder. There! there! I've said profane words again. Oh, you brute! you brute!"

Mrs. Bierge commenced to weep.

"Don't weep, my dear, don't weep for me."

"Weep for you, you rascal? I wish I had that privilege; yes, I do. I'd weep a heap; I would weep for you, indeed. But go on; you said you could wash it off—let's see you. One thing I promise you: wash, wash, wash; yes, wash, wash, wash; that's what you'll do until tomorrow morning unless you get it off sooner. No sleep for me, no sleep for you."

To get to bed was all that Bierge wanted, and he began to feel that his punishment was greater than he could bear. At that moment he desired to crawl into bed, and there rang in his ears the determined words of his irate wife: "You'll wash, wash, wash, until daylight."

He did commence to wash; but, alas! the stain would not yield; it was tenacious, skin-adherent, and the man's soul was filled with despair.

CHAPTER VIII.

JERRY GIVES THE TOWN A GREAT SCARE.

THE pitiless woman stood over him, but at length her gripings returned. She retired from the room perforce, and then Bierge gave vent to his feelings in words. He said:

"Jerry, you arch-devil, I owe all this to you; yes, to you, and I'll be revenged, I'll be revenged."

It is a pity Jerry could not have been present to witness how severe the punishment was that his enemy received.

it might possibly have caused him to relent; but, alas he did not see it and the war went on. Both sought revenge, or rather, one sought retaliation, the other sought revenge.

In a little time Mrs. Bierge returned to the kitchen. Her husband fell to the floor, pretending sheer exhaustion, when the woman in her fury seized a bucket of water and chucked its contents all over him. The man rolled over and over, and she pursued him, finally seizing a tub half filled with suds, and this she dashed upon him. The man begged and begged, but she had gone mad as she remembered the proposed visit of the parson on the following night.

"Let me go," he said. "To-morrow I will get it off."

"To-morrow you will get it off?"

"Yes, I will. I will be stronger then."

"Will you?"

"I will; oh, yes; oh, yes."

"That must come off to-night."

"It will not come off."

"It must; it must."

The woman got some bath brick dust, used to scour tins, and with this she set to work, and he cried out:

"You'll wear the skin off my face."

"That is what I mean to do. I'd rather have a red man for a husband than a black man. Yes, I'll scour the skin all off your face."

"Let me get my breath, my dear."

"All right; rise to your feet."

The man did rise. He could stand it no longer, he was almost dead. He made a rush for the door; the woman did not discern his purpose, and ere she was aware he had passed out, and like a second Rip Van Winkle he rushed forth, driven a fugitive from his own door by an irate wife, and, we will add, for the same reason.

The woman ran after him.

"Bierge," she cried, "come back."

The man was beyond her reach and he answered:

"No, never again; never again."

"What do you mean?"

"You have driven me forth."

"Come back, I say."

"I won't."

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to sea."

"What?"

"I am going away forever."

"Jacob Bierge, come back at once."

There was a tinge of teror in the woman's tones. Bierge was a coward, but, as we have heretofore intimated, he was no fool. He saw his advantage. The use of the first name, Jacob, betrayed much, and he answered:

"No, I'll never come back. You are welcome to all I have earned all my life. I'll go into the world and gather a new fortune, but I'll stand you no longer."

"Jacob, come in here."

"I will not. Good-by; yes, good-by forever."

The woman commenced to sob.

"Oh, Jacob, do not desert me."

"You have driven me forth."

"I did not mean it, Jacob."

"I'll be buried in the deep blue sea. I'll never find a grave in the cellar under the cider barrel. I'll not stay to be murdered."

"Jacob, dear, I'll not murder you; I'll not harm you. Come back, dear. I know I was harsh. I'll never be harsh again; no, never; no, never."

The woman sobbed and cried in the most pitiful manner.

"You will forget your promise if I come back."

"No, Jacob, I will not. Come, dear, let me wash off the stain, you dear."

"What! scrub me again? No, no; I'd rather go under the cider barrel."

"I won't touch you, Jacob, dear. Come back."

"Oh, I know you."

"I've always been a good wife to you."

"Yes, when you aren't mad. You're mad now."

"I won't be mad any more, Jacob, dear; see, I laugh real pleasant."

The woman tried to laugh and Bierge enjoyed his triumph.

"Good-by," he called.

"Jacob, you do not mean to desert me?"

"You drove me forth."

"No, no."

"Yes, yes."

"Oh, I'll love you so if you will only, only come back. Come, come, my dear, come to your loving, patient, and enduring wife."

"You enduring and patient? You make me laugh. I am the one who is enduring and patient."

"Yes, you are a dear, dear, dear good man. You are patient; you are enduring; you are everything that is good."

Bierge thought his triumph was complete and he returned to the house; but the instant he was inside the door his wife seized him, and the way she wolloped him was a caution. But in time she let him go and he retired to bed, cursing the terror who had caused him all the misery he had endured that night, and as he lay there, black and blue, he muttered:

"I'll kill that rascal, Jerry; I'll kill him."

Jerry, as intimated, reached his cave and peacefully slept, while his enemy, Bierge, was enduring all the suffering a mad and indignant woman could inflict.

On the Monday following, after having got the stain off

his face, Bierge held a consultation with the squire and said:

"We must capture that fellow, Jerry Cushman."

"He is out of my jurisdiction."

"He is?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"He has run away."

"No, sir, he has not run away."

"Yes, he has been gone for over a week. He has not been seen since he served our boys out in the woods."

"He is lurking in the woods at this moment."

"No, he'd starve to death."

"He is there. I saw him only Saturday afternoon."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"On the road between here and ——."

"You saw him?"

"I saw him, and tell you he is making secret visits to his home."

"Then we'll catch him."

"You should organize a company and go and capture him. It's a shame the way you allow the people around here to suffer at the hands of that young desperado."

"I didn't know that any one was suffering."

"No, you don't know," said Bierge. He did, however; yes, he knew well how some one had suffered.

Soon there arose a great many stories about Jerry, and of course they were exaggerated, and he did indeed become the terror of the town; for it was rumored that he had sworn to set every house in town on fire. One barn did burn and it was declared that Jerry had fired it. The rumors concerning him of course were contradictory. There were those who declared that he was an abused lad

and had not committed any of the acts ascribed to him.

Jerry, meantime, had arranged to give the town a great scare. One morning it was announced in town that two valuable dogs were missing, and on the following morning it was announced that three more dogs were missing. The people did not know what to make of it. The matter became a theme of constant discussion and it was determined to appoint a patrol and watch for the thieves, and yet on the following morning, despite the watch, three more dogs were missing, making eight valuable dogs that had disappeared in three nights. It was talked about holding a village meeting, and in the meantime the watch was doubled. Before night twenty men agreed to go on guard duty, and at night they set in to patrol. They were armed with guns and talked loud. They traveled in pairs, arranged signals, and indeed had everything fixed for a general alarm. Well, the general alarm came in a most thrilling and startling manner. It was just after midnight. All in the town was still; even the patrol stepped, as it were, on tiptoe, although each man had boasted as to what he would do in case an alarm was given. As stated, it was just after midnight when the fun commenced, and in all history never before was there such an excitement in a country village as occurred just after the hour named, in the village where Jerry lived.

As we have intimated, all was silent as the grave, when suddenly pandemonium appeared to have broken loose. Down the road toward the main street of the village came with a rush a lot of straggling lights, all moving swiftly a foot or so above the ground, and shooting along like meteors; and with the lights there came a most horrible din of jingling cow bells, mingled with barks and yelps and growls. The patrol saw the moving lights, heard the barks and yelps and jingling of bells. They assembled in a

group, and as the remarkable cavalcade advanced they set up a yell. They fired their guns. One of them ran to the schoolhouse and rung the school bell, another ran to church and rang the church bell; and, as it appeared, the world had come to an end, and down the road came the lights and the jingling cow bells. Men ran from their houses in shirt sleeves, and yelled fire. Women ran out in their nightgowns and screeched and screamed murder, fire, and everything else, and the brave patrol, instead of facing the dangers, ran away like the poltroons they were. And into the town came a pack of dogs, lights at their necks and cow bells at their tails, and away they scattered, going for their homes and kennels and flying for their masters, and the latter running madly away, thinking in their excitement and bewilderment that a four-footed devil was after them. At length one man had the courage to meet his dog. He released the light from the collar around his neck and took the cowbell from his tail, and then the mystery was explained—the whole mystery—the missing dogs and the wild confusion.

It was some time before matters cooled off, and the good folks retired to their homes and beds; but on the following morning the excitement ran high. It was the terror of the town—a trick of that desperado, Woodchuck Jerry. Some good people laughed at the joke, but the majority of the people were wild with indignation, and it was resolved to go into the woods and hunt down the rascal who was giving the good people so much trouble and such a great scare. A town meeting was held and a dozen good men and true volunteered to scour the woods and capture the torment.

That same night Mrs. Cushman sat up in her home. She was thinking of her many troubles, and yet over all came a recollection of the letter she had received from her husband. It had been a hard day for her; Bierge had

been to her house and had abused her in the most violent and insulting manner. The squire also had called and added insult to injury and threats, telling her that her son was at the bottom of the whole business, that the people would organize and catch him and lynch him.

"Yes, lynch him," cried the irate man.

Jerry had told his mother he was going to Boston. She had confidence in him, and yet she had reason to believe that after all he was at the bottom of the scare the people had received. She had no censure for her son, for she knew how he had been abused, and hunted, and persecuted; but she feared he would be captured. Indeed she had heard of the posse that was to scour the woods for him, and she feared violence would follow his capture. She was sad indeed, and resolved that she would herself start early in the morning for the woods, seek her son and warn him. She was thus meditating, when she heard a slight noise, and turning, her boy stood before her. He was smiling, and looked quite fearless and happy.

"Oh, Jerry, my boy," she exclaimed, "where did you come from?"

"I am from Boston, mamma."

"Have you been to Boston, my son?"

"No."

"Why did you say you are from Boston?"

"Because if I am not in Boston I must be from there."

"You told me you would go there."

"I did; but, mamma, I did not say when I would go."

"You must not stay here, my son."

"I must not?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"They are after you."

"Who?"

"The village people."

"They have been after me a long time, but they have not caught me yet, and they never will."

"They have organized a company to scour the woods for you. They threaten to lynch you."

"I know it."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Then you must flee away."

"No, no, mamma; not yet."

"Why not, my son?"

"I am having too much fun to flee away."

"Did you set the dogs running through the town?"

"I did."

"Oh, it was terrible. You should have seen the excitement."

"I did, mamma. I don't get up a show like that and lose the fun; no, no."

"You must flee away."

"I will, when I get ready."

"They will capture you."

"Will they?"

"You cannot escape."

"I have escaped so far."

"But, my son, a dozen men will be on your track."

"Mamma, you are the descendant of old colonial heroes. You have their blood in your veins; so have I, and I will have my revenge. My day has come. I have suffered and suffered; I've been hounded and chased for years, and now I will see them run. I did last night, but that is only the beginning of the fun. I'll see them run again; I'll see the posse run, and then I may be content to go to Boston."

"Oh, my son, I fear you will do something rash."

"One thing, mother; you can depend upon it, they will never lynch me. They will never catch me."

"They have had this house under surveillance for a week."

"Let them."

"They are liable to come here now and catch you."

"They can come, mamma, but they won't catch me. And now, do not have any fear. When you consider how we have been abused it will be a comfort to you years hence to remember that they did not have it all their own way. We never did any one any harm—not even father. All the harm he ever did was to himself. I never harmed any one until they made a fugitive of me."

The mother told Jerry of the letter she had received from his father.

The boy was thoughtful a moment and then said:

"I know what that means. We will be all hunky pretty soon now."

"What does it mean, my son?"

"As papa didn't tell you I'll not forestall his pleasure in telling."

A little later Jerry stole away, but not until he had fully reassured his mother and had aroused her enthusiasm in favor of his methods of retaliation, and he appeared to be so confident of his immunity from capture she was really content to cease protesting.

When Jerry left his mother he glided along in the darkness to a low quarter of the village. He stood a moment and then imitated the whistle of a night bird, and a few moments later a little figure started from under a stone wall and approached him.

"Is that you, Jerry?"

"Yes, Ida, I am here."

"Oh, Jerry, I am scared to death."

"You are a pretty lively corpse, Ida."

"But they mean to capture you this time."

"Do they, indeed?"

"Yes."

The girl proceeded and recited to our hero all that she had overheard and learned of the plans of the village. She particularly dwelt upon the words and propositions of Bierge and the squire.

"Those men appear to hate me from away back," said Jerry.

"Yes, they suggest the most terrible punishment for you; but, Jerry, I am heartbroken."

"What about, Ida?"

"My poor papa."

"What of him?"

"Bierge owns a mortgage on our little house."

"Yes."

"The interest is overdue for a year."

"Yes."

"And Bierge threatens to foreclose. Papa is very gloomy. I fear he will do something rash."

"You need not fear, Ida. All will come out right in the end. I will have something to tell you in a few days —something that will make your papa feel good and old Bierge feel bad."

"What is it, Jerry?"

"I cannot tell you now. I am not altogether sure my self, but I have a premonition, and my premonitions gen erally come true. And now, dear little friend, good-night Keep your courage up, and don't fear for me. I am pre pared for the band when they come to hunt me, and I will give them a surprise that will last them the rest of their lives. They call me the terror of the town. Well, we'll see; I have a rod in pickle for those smart Alecs when they come to the woods, and don't you forget it, I'll make Rome howl."

CHAPTER IX.

JERRY DOES MAKE ROME HOWL AS FAR AS THE VILLAGE POSSE IS CONCERNED.

OUR hero reached his cave just before daylight and la down for a good long rest. He had anticipated the village organization and had prepared for it. He had one of the greatest schemes ever concocted, and he had often muttered:

"Hang the rascals, I'll make them think the world has come to an end. I'll make 'em pray—yes, those who never prayed before in their lives. I've stood their abuse long enough, and now I'll wash out all old scores in one second deluge. I'll make 'em howl, you bet."

Jerry slept far into the day, and late in the afternoon crept from his cave in order to reconnoiter and learn if his foes had come to take their dose.

Jerry had made a very remarkable discovery. He had found a certain conformation of rocks which would in the most perfect manner serve to aid in carrying out the great scheme he had in his mind, and he had spent a great deal of time fixing things, as he said. He set a trap for the posse, but they didn't walk into it. He got upon their trail when he issued forth from his cave late in the day, and sought to inveigle them, but luck was against him.

The men returned to town after the first day's hunt and stated that they had made a thorough hunt, and that in their opinion Jerry had cleared out.

That same night Jerry stole into the village and met Ida. He was determined to keep posted. The girl met him and told him just what the men reported. Ida had no difficulty in picking up all the news, as everything of importance was freely discussed all over the village.

"So they think I've gone away?"

"Yes."

"Good enough; I'll disabuse them of that idea. The squire, it appears, is a bitter foe of mine."

"Yes, it is said he treated your mother shamefully."

Mrs. Cushman had not related to her son the treatment she had received.

"They treated my mother shamefully?"

"Yes."

"She did not tell me."

"She did not wish to, I suppose; but the squire insulted her right in the village, right before every one. Bierge was present and he joined in all the squire said."

"I can spare Bierge for the present, but I will turn my attention to the squire. So they think I have gone away? Good enough; the squire shall learn that I am still in town, and don't you forget it, Ida."

"Oh, Jerry, you will be caught some day."

"Will I?"

"Yes, they will catch you."

"When they do they're welcome, that's all. I will have had fun enough then."

Jerry was very fond of Ida, who was a very pretty girl. She had, as the colonists say, good blood in her, and it is a fact that among our mechanics and working girls are thousands who are the best-blooded people in the land—far better in their ancestry than some of the four hundred, descendants of emigrants, who have money and ride in coaches.

Our hero made some arrangements with Ida for the carrying out of a plan he had in his mind, and then retired to his cave. He spent some hours brooding over a plan for getting square with the squire. The latter was a man who had traveled considerably, and was in the habit of telling great stories of what he had seen, and as the

majority of the village people had never been out of their native state they were compelled to accept all the squire's great narratives, or rather they pretended to accept them. The squire told the biggest fish stories, the biggest hunting stories of any one in the country. He told of being on trains that had been held up, and indeed he had encountered the most wonderful adventures, had performed the most wonderful feats, and although the people listened, when alone they spoke their minds freely and they would have enjoyed seeing the squire taken down a peg. As our readers have discerned, our hero made his terrorisms agree with some weakness or peculiarity of his victim. Jerry well knew of the weakness of the squire, and he determined to give the man a great story to tell. Squire Stoop was a mean man. He was the richest gentleman, as he called himself, in town—richer than Bierge, and if possible meaner. He was too mean to drink, smoke, or chew. He was a great temperance man, because it was cheaper not to drink, and the people in the town who knew his meanness hated him, but they did not dare show their hatred.

Jerry thought and thought a long time before he hit upon a plan, and when he did decide he had planned to give the squire a tale to tell that would excel any of his previous yarns.

The squire lived in an old-fashioned house where he claimed his people had lived before him for over a hundred and fifty years. It was a peculiarly constructed old house, and just suited the plan our hero had formed.

The squire was a widower, but he was paying attention to an old maid in town who was said to have quite a sum in bank. He had one son and two daughters, and he was mean to them. We state all the facts so that our readers will more fully appreciated the great joke our hero had decided to play on him.

There was an old disused mill about a mile from the

village, and it was known that it was alive with rats—all sorts of vermin, indeed. Jerry was a great trapper of small game, and it was because of his success in capturing woodchucks that he had earned the name of Woodchuck Jerry.

The lad lay low all the day succeeding his visit to his mother, but on the following night he issued forth. He went down to the old mill and he set to work on a rat hunt. Within an hour he had bagged at least fifty monstrous and savage rats, and as he returned to his cave with his savage prisoners he muttered:

"Well, Mr. Squire, I'll give you a tale to tell; yes, one that will beat any fish story you ever told."

Our hero went very deliberately to work, and he learned a fact the following night from Ida that just made his eyes dance with delightful anticipations. He fell to the revelation only incidentally. Ida, as a great joke, in talking of the squire said that the old fellow was pushing his courtship with great vigor.

"Why," said she, "he has invited Miss Janet to spend a week with his daughter. Well, she'll go."

"Yes," said Jerry with a chuckle, "she'll go just to save a week's fodder, for she is even meaner than old Stoop."

"Yes, that is what the people say."

"She is to be the guest of Miss Stoop, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Well, well, to think that old maid Stoop should be compelled to entertain the woman who may some day turn her out of her home."

"That's what the people say."

"She will talk pussy cat enough, but oh, how she would like to alarm Miss Janet, eh?"

"That is true, Jerry."

"The arrangement suits me," said our hero.

"Suits you, Jerry?"

"Yes."

"What interest have you in the visit?"

"I have considerable interest, Ida; but I won't explain now. The whole town will be talking about it in a day or two, you bet. Yes, Ida, I am going to raise old Cain down in the squire's house. It will be great fun for you when you hear about it. I'll make Rome howl once more, you bet I will. So the squire insulted my mother, eh? All right, squire, you will insult some one else and not mean it. But, Ida, I want you to do me a favor."

"I'll do anything for you, Jerry."

"You go up to the Stoop house sometimes?"

"Yes, I do. I go up to help at housework."

"I want to know the room Miss Janet occupies when she visits the squire."

"Oh, Jerry, what are you going to do?"

"Revenge the insult to my mother."

"On Miss Janet?"

"No, on the squire."

"I fear you will be caught."

"I am willing to be caught when I get through with my retaliation. Yes, I am willing to be caught."

On the following night Jerry met Ida, and the girl told him just the room Miss Janet occupied.

"She is there?"

"Yes."

"And occupies the room alone?"

"Yes."

"Good enough; I am ready now, and to-morrow night there will be fun up at the squire's house."

"Say, Jerry, why don't you stop tormenting these people? They have about made up their minds to let you alone. They did not go to the woods to-day."

"I want them to come to the woods; there is where I

will work my biggest game. I've got things all fixed for 'em. They are hounding me; all right, I am fixed for them and they will get it before I am through with them.'

When Jerry parted from Ida he went up to the squire's house on a reconnoissance, and he saw that he could carry out his scheme with the greatest of ease.

At length Jerry had everything ready. He would have been glad to have let one or two into his secret so they could enjoy the fun. He determined to see it out himself, at all risks.

"Yes," he ejaculated, "capture or no capture, I am going to see the hipolagian antics to-night."

It was just after one o'clock when a little figure with two bags on his back might have been seen stealing like a thief through the village, and this little figure was Jerry. He went direct to the home of Squire Stoop. He had everything arranged, and like a modern Jack Sheppard he managed to scale the roof, and on tiptoe he stole to the chimney. He had been there before; he had studied the compartments of the flue and he knew just where anything sent down would land. His face was illuminated like the stars, and his eyes danced with the delights of anticipation. The lad looked like a veritable Santa Claus as he approached and upset one of his bags down the flue. Then he skipped quickly across the roof and threw the squalling contents of bag number two down chimney number two, and then our hero skipped off the roof into a tree which spread its umbrageous branches as a kindly guard over the old house.

"Jiminy blue," he cried, "won't there be fun in a minute!"

He hardly had to wait a minute when he heard a yell that would almost have aroused the dead, and the next instant there folllowed a succession of shrill piercing screams and screeches. Then followed the banging of doors, the

raising of windows, and then there came cries of "Fire! murder! watch! help! help!" and every other cry expressive of terror and alarm, and soon out of one of the windows leaped a figure in white. It was Miss Janet in her robe in which she had leaped into her visitor's bed, and the next instant out on the porch rushed the squire. He was bare-legged, and the wind bore his fluttering shirt in a streak behind him. He also yelled, while the old maid screeched. When Stoop heard and saw Miss Janet he ran back into the house, but she had spied him and she cried out:

"Oh, you wretch! Oh, you wretch!"

Stoop was too bewildered and upset to attempt to make explanations at that moment, and the old maid started through the town for her own home, yelling bloody murder as she went. The village people ran out and sought explanations, but she rushed by them, only screeching as an explanation:

"Oh, the wretch! Oh, the wretch!"

Some people had heard the yells at the squire's house and hastened to his home. The squire had put on his clothes and stood trembling and pale, and his family, knowing naught of the real cause of his panic, thought he had gone mad, as he only repeated:

"She called me a wretch. She called me a wretch."

The most terrible suspicions filled the minds of the neighbors, who really believed the squire had gone mad. Finally, however, he vouchsafed an explanation. He declared that his house had been invaded by an army of wild rats, and he stated that some of them were as big as a hare. He further stated that they must have invaded Miss Janet's room and had frightened the life out of her.

Great times followed, as neighbor after neighbor hurried in and listened to the strange tale, and they exchanged glances, and these glances were singularly expressive of

discredit of the story. The basis of discredit was the statement that some of the rats were as big as hares; yes, this statement led them to discredit the whole narrative, and yet to a certain degree Stoop told the truth, as to twenty rats of enormous size the terror of the town had added a couple of hares with their ears clipped, and to the squire in the excitement they all appeared as enormous rats.

Miss Janet reached her home. She was mad, and the chances were against her ever being pacified. She felt that the squire had purposely given her the scare—that it was a mean trick of his; at least this is what she pretended to believe; and as the sequel will show she adhered bitterly to her belief.

On the morning following the exciting incident there was great gossip in the village. The old maid told her story, and the fact that the squire declared that some of the rats were as big as hares lent color to her suspicion, and she declared that they were nothing but ordinary sized rats, that they were chased through her door, and that she saw the squire do the wicked deed.

The latter heard of the old maid's story and called upon her, but was driven away with a broom hurtling over his head, and under a shower of maledictions. A large proportion of the village people sided with the old maid. As intimated, the very extravagance of the squire's story served to deepen the suspicion against him, and the man was wild, when, through Lawyer Bierge, he received the preliminary papers in a suit for damages.

The squire called upon the lawyer and demanded:

"Are you going to conduct this suit against me?"

"Yes, I am."

"How dare you? And then again, haven't you and I always been good friends?"

"That is all true; but I am a lawyer, business is busi-

ness. I am not bringing the suit myself, I am only acting for my client; but I will say, Stoop, it was an awful mean way to treat a timid lady."

"What is that you say?"

Bierge had concluded that it would be business to fall out with the squire right from the start.

"I said it was a mean way to serve a timid lady."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say."

"You rascal!"

"What! you call me a rascal?"

"Yes, I call you a rascal."

"Be careful."

"You are a rascal. You always were a rascal, and I know more about your rascalities than you dream. I'll show you up; yes, I will."

Bierge knocked off the squire's hat. The squire struck back and the two men engaged in a regular rough and tumble, and some of the neighbors were compelled to separate them. The whole town was in a state of great excitement. Our hero, the wicked cause of the trouble, was quietly sleeping in his cave, preparatory to the devisement of a scheme to get his enemies in a box where he could work more of his retaliation.

After his fight with the lawyer the squire returned to his own home. He was bitter against the woman whom he had hoped to make his wife, and he sat in his room brooding over the incidents when his son entered. To the lad he said:

"Ennie, I cannot conceive where those rats came from. Did you ever see any rats about the place?"

"Not in the last six months."

"It's strange where they could have come from."

"Not at all, sir."

"Do you know?"

"I am surprised, father, that you have not suspected long before this."

"Tell me; do you know where they came from?"

"I think I do."

"Where?"

"From the old mill."

"But why did they invade my house?"

"They did not come willingly, father."

"They didn't?"

"No."

"Then why did they come at all?"

"And you do not suspect?"

"I do not."

"The terror of the town——"

"What of him?"

"He brought those rats here and dumped them down the chimney, and that dump may cost you several thousand dollars unless——"

The lad stopped short.

"Go on."

"Unless you capture him and force him to confess; then the suit of Miss Janet will fall to the ground. You will have the laugh on her and on Bierge."

"Ennie, you are a wonder. I'll make a lawyer of you."

"I knew from the start where those rats came from."

"But the big ones?"

"They were hares with cropped ears. Yes, he did it well, he did. He's got you in a bad scrape, and that was his purpose."

"No doubt, no doubt. But how can I prove it?"

"Capture him; accuse him from the start. Let the whole town organize and capture him and you beat Miss Janet all out and you will have the laugh on Bierge. He has shown his cloven foot too soon. He never did like you, father; he was always jealous of you."

"That is true."

"Yes, you know too much about him. He hates you and fears you."

"He does, the villain."

"Yes, he is a villain."

"And why did the terror of the town select me as his victim?"

"I know."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Tell me why."

"You talked pretty rough to his mother. Now if you can capture him and force him to confess you will be all right."

"Suppose he refuses to confess?"

"You can force him."

"Your words are words of wisdom, Ennie. Yes, we will capture that fellow."

"And you must give it out right away that you have proof that he is responsible for the visitation of rats."

"And that will make Bierge become friendly to him."

"Bierge is against you any way, so that part of it don't count."

CHAPTER X.

THE TERROR OF THE TOWN KEEPS UP THE WARFARE.

When the news of the suit of Miss Janet became known there was continued talk, and the people were divided in their opinions. Some sided with the squire, others with the woman. The men as a rule were on the squire's side, and when the squire came out and announced that the

terror of the town was the cause of the whole trouble there came fresh controversy, and it was decided to organize a regular search party. Indeed some of the men made speeches declaring that the fellow, Woodchuck Jerry, had become a regular terror, that the town would become uninhabitable unless something was done to suppress him.

Bierge was present at the meeting, but had nothing to say. He hated Jerry and would have been delighted to see the lad punished, but then he was shrewd enough to discern that if Jerry were captured and forced to confess his suit against the squire would come to naught. He had already lost the squire's good will and would lose actual money out of pocket, besides the prospective goodly sum he had expected to win from the man who had once been his warm friend.

While the people were holding their meeting the cause of the trouble was in town. He called upon his mother in disguise. He found her very nervous and excited, and when she recognzied him she exclaimed:

"Oh, Jerry, you have gone too far."

"Have I, mamma?"

"Yes, my son, something terrible will follow all this commotion."

"You forget, mamma, what we have suffered all these years at the hands of these people. Your life has been wrecked, they have made a vagabond of papa and a fugitive and tramp of me. Why, I am delighted; I have sown the seed of dissension between the squire and the lawyer by my last move. They were united against me and now both of them are ready to become my friend. Bierge will do anything and everything to protect me from capture. I have made a friend of a former enemy; Bierge is on my side now."

"They are holding a town meeting at this moment, my son."

"I know, and I will know every word that is spoken at that meeting by the time it is over. And now listen, mamma; I want to work one trick and then I am off for Boston to learn the good news, and when papa and I return we will come in a coach and four, like a king and prince, and bear you away to a palace in Boston."

"But, my son, suppose they catch you?"

"They never will."

"Suppose they do?"

"It will not amount to anything."

"They will send you to jail, and it will be a lasting disgrace."

"They will never send me to jail; Bierge will take care of that, or the squire will—whichever one of the two I may select to protect me. No, mamma, you have nothing to fear, and suppose there does come great news for us, what a satisfaction it will be to know that while they were yet persecuting and hounding me I got the better of them, and I will, yes I will, leave them a remembrance of me that will become a lasting tradition in this town. I'll have the caboodle of them begging for mercy. I am about square with Bierge and the squire, but there are two or three others who have been very hateful, and when I close up with them I will be satisfied with the balance of account in my favor. And, mamma, don't have any fear; in less than two days I will be on my way to Boston."

Jerry left his mother and met Ida, and to the girl he said:

"Ida, you are a very faithful friend, and some day—and very soon maybe—I will be able to return all the favors you have done me."

The pretty girl blushed, for Ida was indeed a very pretty girl—a type of thousands of poor girls who are naturally pretty and refined, but compelled through poverty to endure all manner of hardship and mortification.

"Don't speak of doing anything for me, Jerry."

"Why not?"

"You will have to look out for yourself."

"Will I?"

"Yes, they have held a town meeting. I just came from there."

"I know it."

"Oh, if you are ever caught it will go hard with you. They must never find you, Jerry."

"They will find me."

"Why not flee away—go to Boston?"

"I will go to Boston in good time, but first those people must find me."

"Do you desire to be found?"

"Yes."

"How strange! Oh, Jerry, you do not know what you are saying."

"Oh, yes, I do, exactly."

"And you want to be caught?"

"I did not say I wanted to be caught."

"What did you say?"

"I said I wanted them to find me, that's all; and when they do find me I'll find them and I'll have a heap of fun. And, Ida, you must help them to find me."

"I help them, Jerry?"

"Yes."

"Never."

"Oh, yes, you will."

"Never; never."

"Why not?"

"They are so mad they would lynch you."

"Oh, I guess not."

"That is what some of them proposed to-night."

"Oh, did they?"

"Yes."

"Well, what have they decided upon?"

"A party of six men—six of the most daring in town—have organized to find you. They will scour the woods, they will camp out there and be on the 'lay' for you night and day. That is their programme; they are in dead earnest, Jerry."

"Are they?"

"They are."

"And so am I, Ida; yes, I am in dead earnest. Who are the six men?"

The girl repeated all the names.

"Ida, this is great luck."

"It is?"

"How?"

"Every one of those men are my bitter enemies. I owe every one of them a grudge. There is not an innocent man among them, and now I am just happy, and you must show them how they can find me."

"I won't do it, Jerry."

"Why not?"

"You are mad."

"That's it—I am mad, and I won't get over my mad until I carry out this last scheme, and then I will go away and they can hunt and scour as much as they please. They will never find me again while I fear them; of that you can rest assured, and you must aid me, Ida."

"How can I aid you?"

"I will write a letter which I will drop in town; you will find the letter and you will carry it to the squire. This letter will tell them where they can find me, they will come and I will be ready for them."

"Jerry, you mean to do something desperate."

"You bet I do."

"You must not."

"No use to argue with me, Ida, if you do not aid me I will get some one else to do so."

"You want me to find the letter?"

"Yes."

"And must I open it?"

"It will be open."

"And I must take it to the squire?"

"Yes."

"Will he believe you wrote it?"

"Yes, he will believe I wrote it."

Jerry went into all the details of his plans, and Ida finally agreed to do as he requested; but it was under continued protest.

As intimated, the lad arranged all his plans and instructed Ida circumstantially as to what she should do, and then he retired to his cave, taking his six-mile tramp like a man going to his daily labor.

On the day following the village meeting there was much discussion in town. Bierge had been busy; he did not come out openly himself, but he managed to inspire a great many different suggestions, and the ruling one was that the squire, recognizing the enormity of his trick on Miss Janet, was seeking to throw the blame on Jerry. And it was asserted that it was easy enough to throw all the blame on one who was not present to defend himself, and it was stated that the squire had bribed Jerry to plead guilty to the charge. Among the most active partisans of the squire was the doctor. He "had it in" for Bierge, as the saying goes, and he went so far as to declare it was his opinion that Bierge had instigated the whole business in order to make capital against the squire. And so the war waged, and at the proper moment Ida, acting under instructions, let it be known that she had picked up a very strange letter on the road, and she hinted that it might have something to do with the terror of the town. The squire heard the rumor of the picking up of a letter and hastened down with two others to see Ida. He found

the girl home and asked if it was true that she had found a letter.

The girl said it was true.

"Let me see the letter."

"No, I will not."

"Why not?"

"It is a letter from Jerry Cushman to his mother, and I am going to take it to her."

"You must let me see it," said the squire.

"No, it is not your letter."

"But Jerry is under the ban of the law; there is a warrant for his arrest. If you do not surrender that letter you become *particeps criminis*. The squire was quite proud of his Latin quotation, but it did not scare Ida, and the squire said:

"If you do not surrender the letter I will issue a warrant for your arrest under a *quo warranto*."

"Oh, dear me!" sobbed Ida, who was acting her part well, "what shall I do?"

"There is but one thing for you to do—surrender the letter and save yourself from further trouble."

"But it is not your letter; let me deliver it to Mrs. Cushman."

"Was it a sealed letter?"

"No, it is only a note—an open note."

"That settles it; you are liable to arrest."

There was the captain of the searching party with the squire and he said:

"You had better save yourself further trouble, Ida."

"But it is not my note."

"It don't make any difference. The squire is a legal officer; he has a right to demand the note, and, as I said, it will save you future trouble."

"Oh, do not compel me to deliver the note."

"Yes, you must."

"Then you must be a witness," said Ida to the man with the squire, "that I was compelled to surrender the note."

"Yes, I will be a witness."

With seeming deep reluctance Ida surrendered the note. The squire glanced at it and exclaimed:

"This is the most fortunate incident that has occurred yet."

The note appeared to be addressed to Mrs. Cushman revealed his hiding-place by the lake and was full of assurances to his mother, telling her she need have no fear, as he was perfectly comfortable in his retreat and could never be found.

The man with the squire did not speak before the girl, but the moment he and the squire were away he said:

"I can go right to that place; I know exactly where it is. It is an old water cave. Thousands of years ago it was worn out by the water, but the course of the stream became diverted and left only a rock chamber. It is a good hiding-place, and only a few know of the cave and how to get into it. I do know, and we have that boy like a rat caught in a trap."

"Ugh!" shuddered the squire, "do not allude to rats, please."

The man smiled. He knew why the squire did not like an allusion to rats.

It was agreed not to say anything about the letter, but a number of men were to be gathered together, and the boy was to be captured.

A little later the squire met the doctor. The latter being his warm friend and partisan, the squire opened up the whole business to him and asked:

"What can we do with that infernal little rascal when we catch him?"

"You are the justice of the peace; you can answer that better than I."

"I do not wish to proceed legally against him."

"Why not?"

"Bierge will be his friend."

"If you can make Bierge friendly to Jerry Cushman you will have accomplished a great revenge in one direction."

"I will accomplish a revenge that way?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"If there is one living being whom the lawyer has reason to hate it is the terror of the town."

"But he hates me worse now."

"No, he does not hate you; it is business with him."

"The lad will be my witness."

"Then you do not need to punish him."

"He may not testify in my favor unless I can scare him into doing so."

The doctor was thoughtful a moment and then said:

"Bribe the boy."

"I have thought of that."

"Then you must act quickly if what I hear is true."

"What do you hear?"

"Oh, never mind at present."

"Doctor, you are my friend."

"I am."

"You are long-headed."

"Thank you.

"Yes, and you are very cool in an emergency."

"Thank you again."

"I am about to organize a party to hunt the boy down."

"That's right."

"Will you lead the party?"

"No."

"You will not serve me?"

"No."

"Then you are not my friend."

"I am your friend, but I do not wish to incur the enmity of the Cushmans."

"You fear that boy?"

"No."

"Then what is the matter?"

"I am not at liberty to tell, but there is a great surprise in store for the people of this village."

"You know of some trick that boy is about to play?"

"No; but there is a great revelation to come, and you and Bierge will be greatly surprised, that's all."

The doctor resisted all urging to reveal what he meant, and finally he and the squire separated. The latter brooded over the doctor's words, and concluded that Jerry had some great scheme of revenge which he intended to carry out. The lad had indeed become the terror of the town.

A little later the squire met a man who had always been a bitter enemy of the Cushmans, and he talked over the general situation, and finally it was agreed that seven men good and true should organize and go forth to capture Jerry. As it turned out, the men selected were all enemies of the Cushmans—bitter enemies.

In after years, in thinking over his experience in the village, our hero often wondered how it was that so many people appeared to hate him and his family.

The men who were to capture Jerry finally organized. The squire for reasons did not go with them, and the men held a meeting and resolved to give Jerry a terrible "laying out," as they put it, and then arrest him and bring him into town. They also resolved to make a night march to the woods and catch him asleep if possible.

Our hero had only a general knowledge of their intentions, but he was fully prepared to receive them, and he muttered:

"It's one more go and then I am off for Boston early in the morning; but I swear those people will have occasion

to remember me the balance of their lives. I will give 'em a scare that will make Christians of 'em for a little while at least."

The searching party started in high glee and with deep resolve. According to their talk they were very determined as to what they would do. One of them remarked:

"It's a shame how this town has been terrorized by that miserable little scamp."

"All right," said another, "he has had his turn and now comes ours. We will terrorize the life out of him; we will force him to a full and complete confession that will send him to jail for a long term."

"They are a miserable family, those Cushmans," said another.

It was about midnight when the men reached the woods. They had brought a couple of dogs with them, and Jerry, who expected them, was near at hand, and expecting the men to bring hounds with them he had arranged for a false scent, and he muttered:

"The dogs will annoy me, so I will fix them first."

The animals struck the false scent and away they sped, their noses to the ground, and the men started to follow in high glee. One of them remarked:

"I did not expect to strike his trail so soon."

"Oh, it makes no difference, we would have found him in his cave. I wish I had thought, and we would have come a great game over him."

"How?"

"One of us might have dressed up like a woman, and he in the dark would expect it to be his mother and run right into our arms."

The man laughed and said:

"I had the same idea."

"I wish you had carried it out."

"Do you see this pack?"

"What do you mean? Have you brought a disguise?"

"Well, you bet."

"Great ginger! that is immense."

"You can bet it is, and I will play mamma for him."

The scheme was revealed to the others of the party and they thought it immense. And so they kept on talking and promising themselves what they would do when they captured the terror of the town.

For over half an hour they followed after the dogs, and then lost track of them. They tramped around and around, but the hounds had distanced them or had become silent.

CHAPTER XI.

RARE SPORT ALL AROUND.

ONE of the men at length suggested that they "lay low" awhile and the dogs would come back. Well, they did come back, and our readers shall know how they came back.

The men gathered under a cliff. They built a fire, and were quite merry, and one of them said:

"If the dogs hadn't struck his trail outside we would go straight to the cave; but as the hounds have run for him the chances are he was on the lookout for his mamma. But he will fetch up in the cave in case he can throw the dogs off the scent, and then we will have him sure. Oh, mamma! and won't we have fun."

The man who was to personate Mrs. Cushman got himself up in his disguise. It was only a rude "cover," but in the darkness one might easily be deceived, especially as the lad was expecting a woman and would have no reason

to believe that any other save his mother would be out there alone in the woods.

The men were making more of a spree of it than anything else. They were not temperance men, and had gone out well fortified to protect themselves against the night air, as they said. And there they were under the cliff, as happy and merry as a young party out on a picnic.

"Hang it," said one, "I wish the hounds would come back."

"Oh, they will come back all right."

"I don't know, as that fellow Jerry is a great woodsman."

"Suppose he is! He can never get the best of those hounds."

"We can't tell about that."

"I can. Why, he will hide from those hounds as he would from a bear if he can."

"He appears to have done so."

"No; the hounds are on a still scent, that's all."

"But will they come back?"

"They will come back or bay until we hear them, and when they bay you may know that they have run down their game."

"I'd like to hear them bay."

"You will, soon enough. We are comfortable here—let's take it easy. We are bound to get that lad and we'll have lots of fun, you bet."

The men were making quite merry, gathered around the fire, when suddenly something came hurtling through the air from the cliff overhead, and the next instant one of the hounds, dead as a salt mackerel, fell, ke-bang, right into the fire and right into their midst, and an instant later hound number two also came over the cliff. The men arose to their feet and gazed in consternation until one of them in a husky voice said:

"The hounds have come back."

"Great Scott!" cried another, "how in thunder did he 'do' the hounds?"

The men all felt pretty shaky for a minute or two, but they were well warmed up with whisky, and under a false courage regained their nerve, and one of them said:

"It's all right. He has 'done' the hounds. He thinks it's square, and he will go to his cave."

"He may 'do' us," said the false Mamma Cushman.

The men all laughed, and one of them said:

"I must admit he's game, he is."

"Yes, he is that."

"It's a pretty grim sight, I tell you, to see those dogs come back dead."

"And he is not far away at this moment. He must have been right over our heads here when he tossed the dead dogs over the cliff."

"Yes, hang him, he is a daring cuss, he is."

"We'll take the dare out of him pretty soon."

"Well, let's go to the cave."

"No, no, not yet."

"He knows now we are in the woods, and may give us the slip."

"He will hide in his cave and we must give him a chance."

The men all got together in a circle, and one of them issued his instructions. It was agreed that they should divide up into several parties, and by different routes make their way to the cave. It was decided to act on the suggestion, and in twos they started off.

It is unnecessary to tell our readers that Jerry did "do" the dogs easily enough, and he saw the men divide into pairs, and he had arranged to lead them on into the cave. He knew more about the rock chamber than they did. They knew of but one entrance; he knew of two secret

exits, and, as stated, he was prepared to give them a false lead.

One of the parties reached the vicinity of the cave, and they were able to discern a human form, and they laid low for their companions to come up. At length the other parties approached, and the men who had arrived in advance told what they had seen. The man who knew the cave at once exclaimed:

"Now we've got him sure."

"Yes, he disappeared right over there," said one.

"Did he see you?"

"No."

"You came up here very sly?"

"You bet we did."

"And you are sure he did not see you?"

"We are sure."

"Then the game is all in our own hands, and we can go slow."

The man who knew about the cave took the lead, and soon he was leading the party through a narrow defile, and one of them suddenly uttered a low cry and pointed to a hat.

"By ginger!" said the leader, "he has known it was a close call, for he has not stopped to pick up his hat. We've got him sure."

"We will have a great tale to tell when we carry him back to the village," said one.

"Yes," added another, "this is really a very romantic adventure. I am enjoying it hugely."

"So am I enjoying it. We are having a great time."

"The village people will owe us a great deal."

"You bet they will. They should give each one of us a medal."

"One thing is certain: we are sort of getting a good lead on old Bierge."

"Yes, he is bringing that suit against the squire from a pure spirit of malignity. He would start a suit against any one of us."

The men kept on their way and soon arrived at a point where there was a small opening right in the side of the cliff—a mere manhole.

"We will have to squeeze in here one at a time."

Some of the men shuddered and one remarked:

"That fellow may have the best of us if we go in there one at a time."

"I'll lead the way," said the man who supposed he knew all about the cave, and in he went, and the others followed until all were in. They were compelled to crawl some distance, and then they arrived in a passage which permitted them to walk upright, and so they kept on until finally they found themselves in the rock chamber, and the leader said in a whisper:

"Now go slow."

The men were feeling a little shaky, although only tracking a mere boy; but the surroundings were rather appalling to them after all, and they spoke in whispers.

"Who has the lantern?" came the question.

The lantern was produced and its sickly light spread over a part of the cavern, only illuminating a limited circle, and beyond all was grim darkness. The men stood pretty close together and appeared undecided what to do, when the leader said:

"This won't do; give me the lantern." He seized the lantern and made a step forward when suddenly the whole cavern was illuminated by a pale light, and there stood revealed a gigantic figure right in the center and and only twenty-five feet distant. The illumination vanished, and there stood the great flaming figure. The men were appalled. Some of them cried out in their terror, and none of them had strength to move.

The show had commenced—only commenced—for our hero had arranged a heap of fun for them and for himself also.

The men did not dare speak until the great figure appeared to move toward them, when they screamed with terror and fell back pellmell over each other. Some of them reached the passage by which they had entered the cavern, and shooting flames of fire waved them back. Some of the fellows fell to the ground in sheer weakness and fright.

It may be all right for some people to declare that they might have known it was all a trick, but a trick of the sort they confronted, under all the surroundings, was very terrorizing indeed.

Only one man kept his nerve and that was the leader. He tried to rally his men back to some show of courage and nerve.

"What's the matter with you men?" he demanded.

"Take us out of here," came the demand.

"Take you out of here? Why, hang you, we've got a fine show here."

The big figure had disappeared and there followed a succession of vivid light-flashes similar to sheet lightning. The cavern would be illuminated, and the effect was simply marvelous, and even the leader felt a little queer. The men did not know which way to turn for fear they would run into a sheet of living fire.

Again some of them made an attempt to go out, but the flashes met them and drove them back. But after a time all the flashes ceased, and they were in darkness save for the sickly light cast by their lantern.

"Take us out of here," again came the demand.

The leader felt that he would like to get out himself, but he did not wish it to so appear, and said:

"You fellows are the biggest lot of cowards I ever met.

Here you come out to capture a bad boy and you are frightened out of your lives."

"Never mind; get us out of here."

"I'll do as you say and come back alone, or rather I'll show you the way out and remain. I am bound to capture Jerry Cushman, and all his tricks are not going to scare me off. I give you that straight."

The leader went to the passage and thrust the lantern forward to illuminate it, when he uttered a cry of surprise.

"Great guns!" he cried.

The men in terror-stricken tones demanded:

"What is it?"

"Oh, it's all right."

"What did you see?"

"Nothing; it's all right."

It was not all right, however. The man had lost his bearings, and he felt very uncomfortable. He commenced to spy around. He went forward a little way, but was checked by a solid wall, and again he exclaimed:

"By ginger!"

"What is it?" came the repeated inquiry.

"It's all right."

"Then lead the way out."

"I will."

"Why don't you?"

"Yes, it's all right."

The man investigated in several directions, and finally the men began to realize that he had lost his bearings, and one of them demanded:

"Have you lost your bearings?"

"No."

"Then take us out."

"I will."

"So you say; but why don't you?"

"I will."

"Well, do it."

"Yes, in a minute."

The man searched and searched, and finally was compelled to admit that he had really lost his bearings.

"What shall we do?" came the question.

"It will be all right."

"We will starve here like a lot of rats."

"No, it's all right. In the daylight I will find our way out, and we will find the boy too."

"Hang it, there is no daylight in here."

"Be cool, will you?"

"But we want to get out."

"So you will in good time."

"It's a good time now," came a chorus of voices.

"Well, if you are in a hurry go out yourselves."

"No, you brought us in here."

"And I'll get you out."

"So you say, and we want to get out right away."

Our hero was at hand and overheard every word that was spoken, and he was enjoying his little triumph to the full. Finally he said:

"Now is the time to scare 'em into Christians, the whole lot of 'em."

The men were in a group when suddenly there came a strange, wild, terrorizing sound. They grasped each other and the inquiry went from mouth to mouth:

"What is that?"

Even the leader had a fit of trembling. The sound continued; it was running water, and they could hear it splash as it struck the floor of the rocky chamber. The leader went forward with his lantern. He advanced just far enough to observe a waterfall actually pouring into the rock chamber, and then his courage gave out and he uttered an exclamation which we will not repeat. Soon the water began to cover the floor of the cave, and all the men

realized that the cavern was filling with water. Even while they gazed the water became fully an inch in depth on the floor of the cavern, and at the rate it was falling it was only a question of hours before the whole place would be full of water.

"We ll drown!" came the heartrending cry.

The cry was taken up by all the men, and there followed a wild, frantic scramble, and shouts filled the rocky interior. Pitiful were their cries for help. They were like madmen, and there the water poured in, seemingly increasing in volume.

"We'll be drowned like dogs!" came the wild, frantic declaration, and there came a response:

"Yes, you villains, you'll all be drowned like dogs."

The men heard the voice, and they appealed for mercy —cried in loud tones:

"Save us! save us!" and the voice said:

"Oh, you fellows are having a great time; but pray, pray, for your time has come. Yes, pray, pray."

Some of the men did drop on their knees and prayed long and loud. They were beside themselves with fright, and no wonder, for they were indeed in a terrible plight, and there came a voice warning them to "Confess, confess; yes, confess all your wickedness, you scoundrels."

The water was already over their shoes. The leader was making frantic efforts to find the way out, but, alas! he had indeed lost his bearings, and we will here state that Jerry had so arranged that he would lose his bearings. The lad had worked a great scheme from first to last. He had had ample time for the carrying out of his plans. He was singularly ingenious, as our readers have already discerned, and he was enjoying the wild terror of the men who had organized and made the trip to capture and terrorize him. The terror, however, was running wild the other way. Some of the men in their fright actually

threw themselves upon the floor of the cave and rolled in the water, and there sounded in their ears a succession of laughs. The water continued to rise until it was about a foot in depth, and then it stopped. The men listened, but indeed it had stopped, and their courage partially revived, and one of them said:

"Now is our chance. Get us out of here before the water begins again.

The leader was all done up, but in a mechanical way he looked again in the passage which he had supposed was an exit, and lo, it was clear. He could not understand it, but it was true, and he said:

"Here we are; I've found the way out."

Having found the way out he called the men forward, and a wet, terrified lot they crawled through the opening, and in due time arrived once more in the open air, and one of them said:

"I've had enough of it. I am off for home."

Others so expressed themselves, and with one wild rush they started for the town.

We will here state that Jerry's arrangements were very simple. The flash lights are easily arranged, as most every one knows who has seen a Fourth of July celebration, and the water trick had been arranged; for he had discovered the old gallery through which the water had trickled for ages. He collected a reservoir and at the proper time, on the same principle used to douse the lawyer, he had turned the water into the cavern. And he was around when the men made their wild rush for home.

Jerry had determined to start for Boston, but his scheme had been such a great success he determined to postpone his trip to the Massachusetts capital until he heard all about the effect of his succession of tricks on the search party.

On the night following the incidents we have described

Jerry went to the village. He found Ida, and his first salutation was:

"Well, girl, have you heard the news?"

"Have you?"

"No; I came here to hear it from you."

"Jerry, they call you the terror of the town, but since last night they say you are a fiend."

"Did the men give themselves away?"

"Yes; they had a dispute among themselves, and the whole affair is out. They have been accusing each other of cowardice, and the whole village is laughing. And between you and me, you have made a host of friends. Why, the whole village is divided. Bierge is going around in high glee, and the squire is as mad as a March hare. But he threatens to capture you yet, and when he does the people only laugh the merrier."

Jerry went up and saw his mother. The good woman was on the lookout for him.

"Jerry," she said, "I am glad to see you; but, my son, you have gone far enough now."

"No, mother, not quite far enough."

"Yes, my son, as your mother and friend I must protest."

"But, mother, I am going to Boston."

"And will you stop these tricks?"

"Certainly I will. I am square with every one in this town now, and I am prepared to call off my dogs."

"I must admit, my son, that you have made friends."

"So I've heard."

"Yes, several people called upon me—even the doctor, and he expressed full sympathy with me and with you."

"He was very kind, mamma."

"Yes, my son; but it is just possible he has heard something."

"Heard what?"

"I have great news for you."

"Good news?"

"Yes, good news; and we will soon hold up our heads in this town once more."

"Not in this town, mamma."

"Yes, in this town. I have a little spirit, Jerry, and I want to hold up my head right here in this town."

"Let's hear the news."

"Your father's great-uncle, Silas Cushman, is dead."

"Well?"

"He died without leaving a will."

"I suspected as much, mamma."

"Your father and his cousin are the only direct heirs."

"Good for poor father!"

"Your father is no longer poor. He is worth over a quarter of a million."

"Good for the quarter of a million!"

"Yes, I received a letter from him. He is to come home in a few days."

"And the doctor called on you?"

"Yes."

"And he was very kind?"

"Yes, very kind and sympathetic."

"It's the way of the world, mamma. You owe the doctor nothing for his sympathy."

"But it's very pleasant."

"But the doctor has heard of the death of Silas Cushman."

"Yes, but he did not say so. I came to that conclusion, however."

"It's all right for us, mother."

"My son, you do not know how I rejoice."

"So do I, mamma; but I am going to Boston all the same."

"No, no."

"Yes, I must go, and you will go with me."

"Your papa is coming here."

"He can bring you back, but I want you to go to Boston with me."

"You must not be seen around town yet, Jerry."

"I know that, and I don't mean to be. My day will come when I will be seen around town, and don't you forget it, mamma. But now, hoopla for Boston!"

Jerry persuaded his mother and arranged to meet her at a station some distance from his native town. All his arrangements were complete and then he returned to the lake.

In the meantime the story on the following day came out. It became known that the Cushmans had fallen heir to a large sum of money. The amount was largely exaggerated, as is usually the case, but it was known to be a big sum, however, and it was a sight to see the people who called upon Mrs. Cushman. There was one man who was mad beyond all others in the town, and that man was Bierge, the lawyer. He was worse than mad, for he saw the writing on the wall. He had plundered Cushman and he feared that with sober senses, and money, his victim might seek justice. The squire also felt very uncomfortable, and it was remarkable what a hero Jerry had become. All his peccadilloes were treated as so many boyish jokes or witty tricks. Every one claimed to be his friend, for the whole real landed value of the village was not much more than the sum it was reputed Cushman had fallen heir to, and everybody wanted to be on the friendly side with the millionaire. It is the way of the world.

At the time named Jerry met his mother. He had carried the only decent clothes he had to the cave with him, and there made his change. Mother and son arrived in Boston in due time and found husband and father. The party went to a hotel, for Mr. Cushman had received that

very day advances on his prospective inheritance, and had abundance of money. Matters were talked over long and earnestly, and our hero prevailed with his parents not to return to the village. He said:

"There is one thing we know: all the friends we may meet there in future, save a few, will be false friends. Once a wood sawyer always a wood sawyer. We will meet with outward friendship and inward hatred aroused by old recollections and present jealousies."

"Jerry," said the father, "you talk like a philosopher."

"Insults and humiliations have made a philosopher of me," was Jerry's response.

Later on Jerry had a talk with his father and persuaded him to send quite a sum of money to Ida's father, and he made his father promise to send them a certain sum annually.

A house was taken in Boston, and Jerry attended a preparatory school, and after some years went to Yale College, where he graduated with honor. During all that time he had never visited his native village, nor had he expressed a desire to do so.

As our readers know, our hero was naturally a very robust and powerful youth. He took great pride in his native strength, and also constantly practiced to maintain his good health, and in time became a youth of wonderful muscular development. He did not enter the football team, the baseball nine, or boat crew, but devoted his time to study; and, as stated, in due time graduated with high honors. Later, he passed through a medical school, and one bright morning went on board a steamer as Dr. Cushman. He desired to become great in his profession, and had decided upon several courses of lectures in different European capitals. And so eleven years passed and at five-and-twenty, Jerry, or rather Dr. Cushman, was one of the most accomplished and handsome young Americans in Paris.

One evening our hero was sitting in a *café*. He had studied French with such studiousness that he had become an excellent French scholar, and, as stated, he was sitting in a *café* when he observed sitting near him a powerful-looking Frenchman with two companions. Jerry would have paid little attention to them had it not been for one simple word that was dropped. He heard the big, fierce-looking fellow say:

"I have been baffled, comrades; yes, baffled by a very pretty girl."

"That is strange," said one of his companions, speaking in a semi-serious tone.

"Yes, she is a young American girl—one of the prettiest girls I ever met. I have sought her acquaintance, but she refuses to become friendly with me."

"Indeed!"

"She is a young artist, and very bright, and will one day become quite an artist unless——"

"Well, proceed."

"Unless she loves me, or rather learns to love me."

"Lay your title at her feet, and she will love."

"No, no, my title is not for barter, nor is my love. But, comrades, I love romance, and I've decided to win that girl. One of you must help me. Which one will volunteer?"

Both offered their services, and the rascal selected one of them, with apologies to the other, and then he disclosed his plan, and our hero overheard every word of the devilish scheme that the heartless *roué* had concocted to abduct a poor, pretty American girl. And it was lucky for the American girl that the scheme was revealed to a man of our Jerry's, or rather Dr. Cushman's, singularly heroic temperament.

As intimated, Jerry had all the fellow's plans and he set to work to baffle his game once more.

It was night and Jerry walked up the avenue designated by the intending abductor, and a carriage passed.

"There they go," said Jerry; and he hastened his steps to where a man stood holding a saddled horse. Jerry was a great horseman and he was also an adept in all athletic exercises. He mounted his horse and started in pursuit of the carriage, but he did not have to go far. As he espied the carriage drawn up to the curb, he drew rein under the shadow of a tree and waited, and a little later he saw a female closely veiled proceeding along on the same side of the street where the carriage was drawn to the curb. He knew what would follow and would have interfered at that moment, but for reasons—excellent reasons—determined to let the game proceed. The deed was quickly done; the girl arrived opposite to where the men stood when she was suddenly seized. Her cries were quickly smothered and she was hustled into the carriage and away went the vehicle at a rattling pace toward the Bois de Boulogne. Jerry mounted his horse and sped away after the carriage, which passed through the great Parisian park and beyond, taking the road toward Versailles. Close behind followed our hero until the carriage turned off through a side road and soon halted at the great gate which opened on the walled garden of a chateau.

"Here we are," muttered Jerry; "and now the fun—the real fun—commences." He started his horse at a gallop, and dismounted within a few feet of the carriage just as one of the men alighted. The American did not stand on ceremony, he was there for business. He carried a Yankee club—a New York cop's regular night-stick—and he cried out:

"Aha! you miserable scoundrel, so you will abduct an American girl will you? Do you know every American in Paris is a watch and guard over his countrywomen?"

Our hero saw the man draw a pistol. He was in a des-

perate mood; but his mood and intention did not avail him at that moment. The club cut the air and the pistol was knocked from the man's grasp; it made another curve and landed on the man's head and down went the fellow. The second abductor, meantime, had leaped from the vehicle, and he too received a terrible blow.

As we have intimated, our hero had started well prepared. He still recollected some of his boyish tricks, and in less than two minutes he had made black men of the two abductors, using the same stain that he had used on old Bierge in his native town. He had served the villains out well, had taught them a terrible lesson, and had furnished them a week's job each to make themselves white men again. He then thrust his head in the carriage and to the girl, who had made an attempt to alight, he said in English:

"Stay where you are, you are all right. I am an American, tell me where you wish to be driven."

The girl appeared to be a young lady of great pluck and she gave her address. The voice of the American and his words were a great assurance to her, and she appeared to take in the whole situation, for there had come to her a most thrilling revelation.

Jerry said to the driver:

"You will return, I will pay you double fare; do not hesitate or I will kill you."

The driver had seen enough. He did not wish to die, and he realized that the daring man who had served out the other two men so quickly meant business from away back. He turned his horses and started on his return trip, while Jerry mounted his horse and followed, leaving the two Frenchmen to gather themselves up as best they could.

It was only a half-hour's drive and the carriage halted in front of the house where the girl resided. It was an out-of-the-way neighborhood and the street was dark as was the night. Jerry opened the carriage door and was about to assist the girl to alight, when he was struck al-

most dumb with surprise as the question was addressed to him:

"Is that you, Jerry Cushman?"

Jerry could not speak, and there came a merry laugh and the remark:

"To think, Jerry, that we should meet under such remarkable circumstances in Paris."

Jerry found his voice and demanded:

"Great ginger! miss, who are you?"

"Don't you recognize me, Jerry?"

There was something in the voice that stirred old recollections and he demanded:

"Can it be possible? is it Ida?"

"Yes, Jerry, it's Ida."

"Great Scott! how wonderful! how providential!"

Explanations followed; Jerry told his story and Ida told hers. She related how with the money his father had allowed her family she had been enabled to study in Boston, and how later she had gone to Paris to study art.

Jerry stayed a long time with Ida and was introduced to the American lady with whom she lived and who was her chaperone.

Well, dear readers, our tale is ended. Ida continued her studies and so did Jerry, and one year from the time of the great rescue there arrived in Boston a young American accompanied by his beautiful bride, and at the Hotel Vendome the gentleman registered as Dr. and Mrs. Cushman, and the beautiful bride was Ida, the shoemaker's daughter. With a little money advantage, the girl with the good old New England blood in her veins had developed into the beautiful and accomplished young lady who became our hero's wife.

Their subsequent visit to their native town, and the long series of triumphant incidents that followed, we must leave to the imagination of our readers, with the assurance that this tale has been told with little variation from the original narrative as related to the writer during a trip abroad by one who knew all the parties, and recited the incidents expressly for the purpose of having them recorded in a narrative for the amusement and encouragement of poor boys and girls all over the world.

THE END.

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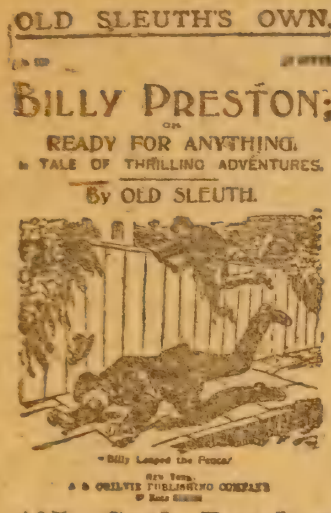

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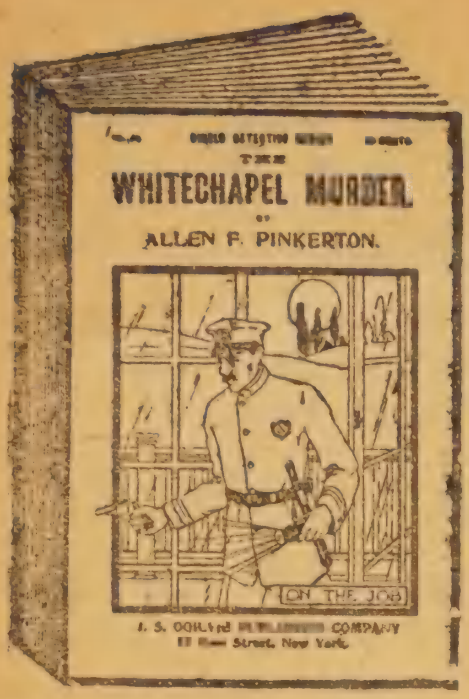

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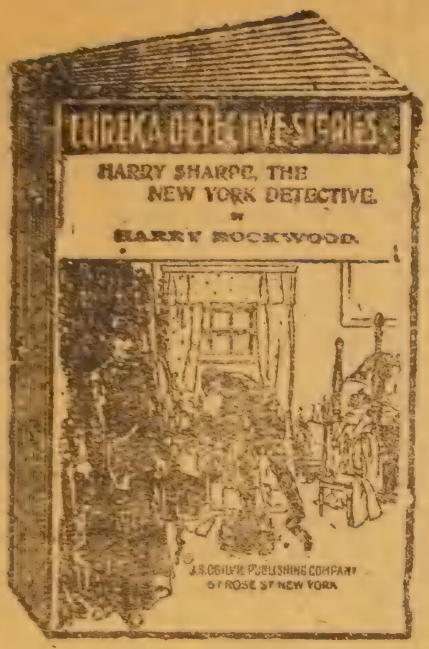

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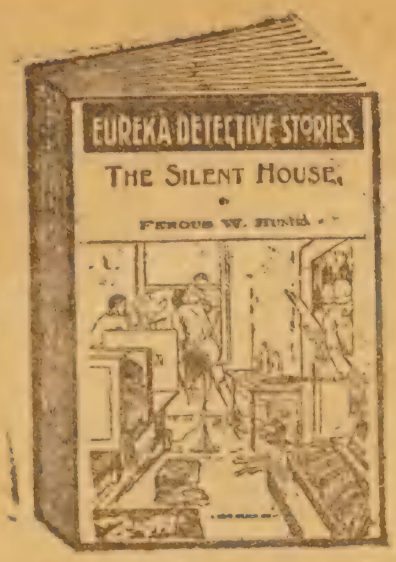

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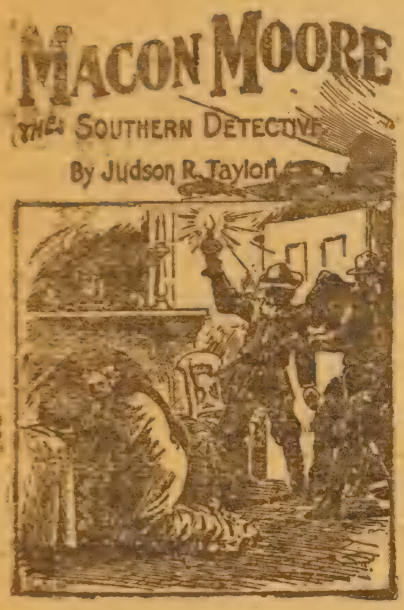

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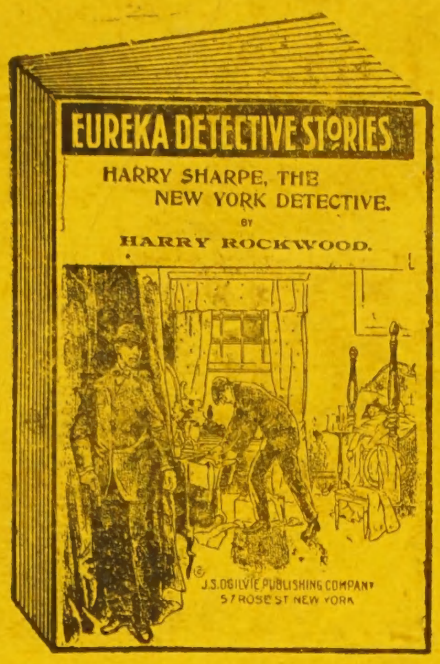

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